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*"Come and see her!" cried Savarus, leading the  
Abbé into the room where hung the portrait*

THE WORKS OF  
HONORÉ DE BALZAC

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY  
GEORGE SAINTSBURY

IN EIGHTEEN VOLUMES

VOLUME X

COUNTRY DOCTOR

COUNTRY PARSON  
FIRM OF NUCINGEN  
ALBERT SAVARUS

BIGELOW, BROWN & CO., INC.  
NEW YORK



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ALBERT SAVARUS





# **THE COUNTRY DOCTOR**



## PREFACE

IN hardly any of his books, with the possible exception of *Eugénie Grandet*, does Balzac seem to have taken a greater interest than in *Le Médecin de Campagne*; and the fact of this interest, together with the merit and intensity of the book in each case, is, let it be repeated, a valid argument against those who would have it that there was something essentially sinister both in his genius and in his character.

The *Médecin de Campagne* was an early book; it was published in 1833, a date of which there is an interesting mark in the selection of the name "Evelina," the name of Mme. Hanska, whom Balzac had just met, for the lost Jansenist love of Benassis; and it had been on the stocks for a considerable time. It is also noteworthy, as lying almost entirely outside the general scheme of the *Comédie Humaine* as far as personages go. Its chief characters in the remarkable, if not absolutely impeccable, *répertoire* of MM. Cerfberr and Christophe (they have, a rare thing with them, missed Agathe the forsaken mistress) have no references appended to their articles, except to the book itself; and I cannot remember that any of the more generally pervading *dramatis personæ* of the *Comedy* makes even an incidental appearance here. The book is as isolated as its scene and subject—I might have added, as its own beauty, which is singular and unique, nor wholly easy to give a critical account of. The transformation of the *crétin*-haunted desert into a happy valley is in itself a commonplace of the preceding century; it may be found several times over in Marmontel's *Contes Moraux*, as well as in other places. The extreme minuteness of detail, effective as it is in the picture of the house and elsewhere, becomes a little tedious even for well-tried and well-affected readers, in reference to the exact number of cartwrights and harness-makers, and so forth; while the modern reader pure and simple,

though schooled to endure detail, is schooled to endure it only of the ugly. The minor characters and episodes, with the exception of the wonderful story or legend of Napoleon by Private Goguelat, and the private himself, are neither of the first interest, nor always carefully worked out: La Fosseuse, for instance, is a very tantalizingly unfinished study, of which it is nearly certain that Balzac must at some time or other have meant to make much more than he has made; Genestas, excellent as far as he goes, is not much more than a type; and there is nobody else in the foreground at all except the Doctor himself.

It is, however, beyond all doubt in the very subordination of these other characters to Benassis, and in the skillful grouping of the whole as background and adjunct to him, that the appeal of the book as art consists. From that point of view there are grounds for regarding it as the finest of the author's work in the simple style, the least indebted to superadded ornament or to mere variety. The dangerous expedient of a *récit*, of which the eighteenth-century novelists were so fond, has never been employed with more successful effect than in the confession of Benassis, at once the climax and the center of the story. And one thing which strikes us immediately about this confession is the universality of its humanity and its strange freedom from merely national limitations. To very few French novelists—to few even of those who are generally credited with a much softer mold and a much purer morality than Balzac is popularly supposed to have been able to boast—would inconstancy to a mistress have seemed a fault which could be reasonably punished, which could be even reasonably represented as having been punished in fact, by the refusal of an honest girl's love in the first place. Nor would many have conceived as possible, or have been able to represent in life-like colors, the lifelong penance which Benassis imposes on himself. The tragic end, indeed, is more in their general way, but they would seldom have known how to lead up to it.

In almost all ways Balzac has saved himself from the dangers incident to his plan in this book after a rather miraculous fashion. The Goguelat myth may seem discon-

nected, and he did as a matter of fact once publish it separately; yet it sets off (in the same sort of felicitous manner of which Shakespeare's clown-scenes and others are the capital examples in literature) both the slightly matter-of-fact details of the beatification of the valley and the various minute sketches of places and folk, and the almost super-human goodness of Benassis, and his intensely and piteously human suffering and remorse. It is like the red cloak in a group; it lights, warms, inspirits the whole picture.

And perhaps the most remarkable thing of all is the way in which Balzac in this story, so full of goodness of feeling, of true religion (for if Benassis is not an ostensible practitioner of religious rites, he avows his orthodoxy in theory, and more than justifies it in practice), has almost entirely escaped the sentimentality *plus* unorthodoxy of similar work in the eighteenth century, and the sentimentality *plus* orthodoxy of similar work in the nineteenth. Benassis no doubt plays Providence in a manner and with a success which it is rarely given to mortal man to achieve; but we do not feel either the approach to sham, or the more than approach to gush, with which similar handling on the part of Dickens too often affects some of us. The sin and the punishment of the Doctor, the thoroughly human figures of Genestas and the rest, save the situation from this and other drawbacks. We are not in the Cockaigne of perfectibility, where Marmontel and Godwin disport themselves; we are in a very practical place, where time-bargains in barley are made, and you pay the respectable, if not lavish, board of ten francs per day for entertainment to man and beast.

And yet, explain as we will, there will always remain something inexplicable in the appeal of such a book as the *Médecin de Campagne*. This helps, and that, and the other; we can see what change might have damaged the effect, and what have endangered it altogether. We must, of course, acknowledge that as it is there are *longueurs*, intrusions of Saint-Simonian jargon, passages of *galimatias* and of preaching. But of what in strictness produces the good effect we can only say one thing, and that is, it was the genius of Balzac working as it listed and as it knew how to work.

The book was originally published by Mme. Delaunay in September 1833 in two volumes and thirty-six chapters with headings. Next year it was republished in four volumes by Werdet, and the last fifteen chapters were thrown together into four. In 1836 it reappeared with dedication and date, but with the divisions further reduced to seven; being those which here appear, with the addition of two, *La Fosseuse* and *Propos de Braves Gens* between *À Travers Champs* and *Le Napoléon du Peuple*. These two were removed in 1839, when it was published in a single volume by Charpentier. In all these issues the book was independent. It became a *Scène de la Vie de Campagne* in 1846, and was then admitted into the *Comédie*. The separate issues of Goguelat's story referred to above made their appearance first in *L'Europe Littéraire* for June 19, 1833 (*before* the book form), and then with the imprint of a sort of syndicate of publishers in 1842.

G. S. ·

# THE COUNTRY DOCTOR

"For a wounded heart—shadow and silence."

*To my Mother.*

## I

### THE COUNTRYSIDE AND THE MAN

ON a lovely spring morning in the year 1829, a man of fifty or thereabouts was wending his way on horseback along the mountain road that leads to a large village near the Grande Chartreuse. This village is the market town of a populous canton that lies within the limits of a valley of some considerable length. The melting of the snows had filled the bowlder-strewn bed of the torrent (often dry) that flows through this valley, which is closely shut in between two parallel mountain barriers, above which the peaks of Savoy and of Dauphiné tower on every side.

All the scenery of the country that lies between the chain of the two Mauriennes is very much alike; yet here in the district through which the stranger was traveling there are soft undulations of the land, and varying effects of light which might be sought for elsewhere in vain. Sometimes the valley, suddenly widening, spreads out a soft irregularly shaped carpet of grass before the eyes; a meadow constantly watered by the mountain streams that keep it fresh and green at all seasons of the year. Sometimes a roughly built sawmill appears in a picturesque position, with its stacks of long pine trunks with the bark peeled off, and its mill stream, brought from the bed of the torrent in great square wooden pipes, with masses of dripping filament issuing from every crack. Little cottages, scattered here and there, with their gardens full of blossoming fruit trees, call up the ideas that are aroused by the sight of industrious poverty; while the thought of ease, secured after long years of toil,



is suggested by some larger houses farther on, with their red roofs of flat round tiles, shaped like the scales of a fish. There is no door, moreover, that does not duly exhibit a basket in which the cheeses are hung up to dry. Every roadside and every croft is adorned with vines; which here, as in Italy, they train to grow about dwarf elm trees, whose leaves are stripped off to feed the cattle.

Nature, in her caprice, has brought the sloping hills on either side so near together in some places, that there is no room for fields, or buildings, or peasants' huts. Nothing lies between them but the torrent, roaring over its waterfalls between two lofty walls of granite that rise above it, their sides covered with the leafage of tall beeches and dark fir trees to the height of a hundred feet. The trees, with their different kinds of foliage, rise up straight and tall, fantastically colored by patches of lichen, forming magnificent colonnades, with a line of straggling hedgerow of guelder rose, briar rose, box and arbutus above and below the roadway at their feet. The subtle perfume of this undergrowth was mingled just then with scents from the wild mountain region and with the aromatic fragrance of young larch shoots, budding poplars, and resinous pines.

Here and there a wreath of mist about the heights sometimes hid and sometimes gave glimpses of the gray crags, that seemed as dim and vague as the soft flecks of cloud dispersed among them. The whole face of the country changed every moment with the changing light in the sky; the hues of the mountains, the soft shades of their lower slopes, the very shape of the valleys seemed to vary continually. A ray of sunlight through the tree-stems, a clear space made by nature in the woods, or a landslip here and there, coming as a surprise to make a contrast in the foreground, made up an endless series of pictures delightful to see amid the silence, at the time of year when all things grow young, and when the sun fills a cloudless heaven with a blaze of light. In short, it was a fair land—it was the land of France!

The traveler was a tall man, dressed from head to foot in a suit of blue cloth, which must have been brushed just

as carefully every morning as the glossy coat of his horse. He held himself firm and erect in the saddle like an old cavalry officer. Even if his black cravat and doe-skin gloves, the pistols that filled his holsters, and the valise securely fastened to the crupper behind him had not combined to mark him out as a soldier, the air of unconcern that sat on his face, his regular features (scarred though they were with the smallpox), his determined manner, self-reliant expression, and the way he held his head, all revealed the habits acquired through military discipline, of which a soldier can never quite divest himself, even after he has retired from service into private life.

Any other traveler would have been filled with wonder at the loveliness of this Alpine region, which grows so bright and smiling as it becomes merged in the great valley systems of southern France; but the officer, who no doubt had previously traversed a country across which the French armies had been drafted in the course of Napoleon's wars, enjoyed the view before him without appearing to be surprised by the many changes that swept across it. It would seem that Napoleon has extinguished in his soldiers the sensation of wonder; for an impassive face is a sure token by which you may know the men who served erewhile under the short-lived yet deathless Eagles of the great Emperor. The traveler was, in fact, one of those soldiers (seldom met with nowadays) whom shot and shell have respected, although they have borne their part on every battlefield where Napoleon commanded.

There had been nothing unusual in his life. He had fought valiantly in the ranks as a simple and loyal soldier, doing his duty as faithfully by night as by day, and whether in or out of his officer's sight. He had never dealt a saber stroke in vain, and was incapable of giving one too many. If he wore at his buttonhole the rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honor, it was because the unanimous voice of his regiment had singled him out as the man who best deserved to receive it after the battle of Borodino.

He belonged to that small minority of undemonstrative retiring natures, who are always at peace with themselves,

and who are conscious of a feeling of humiliation at the mere thought of making a request, no matter what its nature may be. So promotion had come to him tardily, and by virtue of the slowly working laws of seniority. He had been made a sub-lieutenant in 1802, but it was not until 1829 that he became a major, in spite of the grayness of his mustaches. His life had been so blameless that no man in the army, not even the general himself, could approach him without an involuntary feeling of respect. It is possible that he was not forgiven for this indisputable superiority by those who ranked above him; but, on the other hand, there was not one of his men that did not feel for him something of the affection of children for a good mother. For them he knew how to be at once indulgent and severe. He himself had also once served in the ranks, and knew the sorry joys and gayly endured hardships of the soldier's lot. He knew the errors that may be passed over and the faults that must be punished in his men—"his children," as he always called them—and when on campaign he readily gave them leave to forage for provision for man and horse among the wealthier classes.

His own personal history lay buried beneath the deepest reserve. Like almost every military man in Europe, he had only seen the world through cannon smoke, or in the brief intervals of peace that occurred so seldom during the Emperor's continual wars with the rest of Europe. Had he or had he not thought of marriage? The question remained unsettled. Although no one doubted that Commandant Genestas had made conquests during his sojourn in town after town and country after country where he had taken part in the festivities given and received by the officers, yet no one knew this for a certainty. There was no prudery about him; he would not decline to join a pleasure party; he in no way offended against military standards; but when questioned as to his affairs of the heart, he either kept silence or answered with a jest. To the words, "How about you, commandant?" addressed to him by an officer over the wine, his reply was, "Pass the bottle, gentlemen."

M. Pierre Joseph Genestas was an unostentatious kind

of Bayard. There was nothing romantic nor picturesque about him—he was too thoroughly commonplace. His ways of living were those of a well-to-do man. Although he had nothing beside his pay, and his pension was all that he had to look to in the future, the major always kept two years' pay untouched, and never spent his allowances, like some shrewd old men of business with whom cautious prudence has almost become a mania. He was so little of a gambler that if, when in company, someone was wanted to cut in or to take a bet at *écarté*, he usually fixed his eyes on his boots; but though he did not allow himself any extravagances, he conformed in every way to custom.

His uniforms lasted longer than those of any other officer in his regiment, as a consequence of the sedulously careful habits that somewhat straitened means had so instilled into him, that they had come to be like a second nature. Perhaps he might have been suspected of meanness if it had not been for the fact that with wonderful disinterestedness and all a comrade's readiness, his purse would be opened for some harebrained boy who had ruined himself at cards or by some other folly. He did a service of this kind with such thoughtful tact, that it seemed as though he himself had at one time lost heavy sums at play; he never considered that he had any right to control the actions of his debtor; he never made mention of the loan. He was the child of his company; he was alone in the world, so he had adopted the army for his fatherland, and the regiment for his family. Very rarely, therefore, did anyone seek the motives underlying his praiseworthy turn for thrift; for it pleased others, for the most part, to set it down to a not unnatural wish to increase the amount of his savings that were to render his old age comfortable. Till the eve of his promotion to the rank of lieutenant-colonel of cavalry it was fair to suppose that it was his ambition to retire in the course of some campaign with a colonel's epaulettes and pension.

If Genestas's name came up when the officers gossiped after drill, they were wont to classify him among the men who begin with taking the good-conduct prize at school, and who, throughout the term of their natural lives, continue to be

punctilious, conscientious, and passionless—as good as white bread, and just as insipid. Thoughtful minds, however, regarded him very differently. Not seldom it would happen that a glance, or an expression as full of significance as the utterance of a savage, would drop from him and bear witness to past storms in his soul; and a careful study of his placid brow revealed a power of stifling down and repressing his passions into inner depths, that had been dearly bought by a lengthy acquaintance with the perils and disastrous hazards of war. An officer who had only just joined the regiment, the son of a peer of France, had said one day of Genestas, that he would have made one of the most conscientious of priests, or the most upright of tradesmen.

“Add, the least of a courtier among marquises,” put in Genestas, scanning the young puppy, who did not know that his commandant could overhear him.

There was a burst of laughter at the words, for the lieutenant’s father cringed to all the powers that be; he was a man of supple intellect, accustomed to jump with every change of Government, and his son took after him.

Men like Genestas are met with now and again in the French army; natures that show themselves to be wholly great at need, and relapse into their ordinary simplicity when the action is over; men that are little mindful of fame and reputation, and utterly forgetful of danger. Perhaps there are many more of them than the shortcomings of our own characters will allow us to imagine. Yet, for all that, anyone who believed that Genestas was perfect would be strangely deceiving himself. The major was suspicious, given to violent outbursts of anger, and apt to be tiresome in argument; he was full of national prejudices, and above all things, would insist that he was in the right, when he was, as a matter of fact, in the wrong. He retained the liking for good wine that he had acquired in the ranks. If he rose from a banquet with all the gravity befitting his position, he seemed serious and pensive, and had no mind at such times to admit anyone into his confidence.

Finally, although he was sufficiently acquainted with the

customs of society and with the laws of politeness, to which he conformed as rigidly as if they had been military regulations; though he had real mental power, both natural and acquired; and although he had mastered the art of handling men, the science of tactics, the theory of saber play, and the mysteries of the farrier's craft, his learning had been prodigiously neglected. He knew in a hazy kind of way that Cæsar was a Roman Consul, or an Emperor, and that Alexander was either a Greek or a Macedonian; he would have conceded either quality or origin in both cases without discussion. If the conversation turned on science or history, he was wont to become thoughtful, and to confine his share in it to little approving nods, like a man who by dint of profound thought has arrived at skepticism.

When, at Schönbrunn, on May 13, 1809, Napoleon wrote the bulletin addressed to the Grand Army, then the masters of Vienna, in which he said that *like Medea, the Austrian princes had slain their children with their own hands*; Genestas, who had been recently made a captain, did not wish to compromise his newly conferred dignity by asking who Medea was, he relied upon Napoleon's character, and felt quite sure that the Emperor was incapable of making any announcement not in proper form to the Grand Army and the House of Austria. So he thought that Medea was some archduchess whose conduct laid her open to criticism. Still, as the matter might have some bearing on the art of war, he felt uneasy about the Medea of the bulletin until a day arrived, when Mlle. Raucourt revived the tragedy of Medea. The captain saw the placard, and did not fail to repair to the Théâtre Français that evening, to see the celebrated actress in her mythological rôle, concerning which he gained some information from his neighbors.

A man, however, who as a private soldier had possessed sufficient force of character to learn to read, write, and cipher, could clearly understand that as a captain he ought to continue his education. So from this time forth he read new books and romances with avidity, in this way gaining a half-knowledge, of which he made a very fair use. He went so far in his gratitude to his teachers as to undertake the

defense of Pigault-Lebrun, remarking that in his opinion he was instructive and not seldom profound.

This officer, whose acquired practical wisdom did not allow him to make any journey in vain, had just come from Grenoble, and was on his way to the Grande Chartreuse, after obtaining on the previous evening a week's leave of absence from his colonel. He had not expected that the journey would be a long one; but when, league after league, he had been misled as to the distance by the lying statements of the peasants, he thought it would be prudent not to venture any farther without fortifying the inner man. Small as were his chances of finding any housewife in her dwelling at a time when everyone was hard at work in the fields, he stopped before a little cluster of cottages that stood about a piece of land common to all of them, more or less describing a square, which was open to all comers.

The surface of the soil thus held in conjoint ownership was hard and carefully swept, but intersected by open drains. Roses, ivy, and tall grasses grew over the cracked and disjointed walls. Some rags were drying on a miserable currant bush that stood at the entrance of the square. A pig wallowing in a heap of straw was the first inhabitant encountered by Genestas. At the sound of horse hoofs the creature grunted, raised its head, and put a great black cat to flight. A young peasant girl, who was carrying a bundle of grass on her head, suddenly appeared, followed at a distance by four little brats, clad in rags, it is true, but vigorous, sun-burned, picturesque, bold-eyed, and riotous; thorough little imps, looking like angels. The sun shone down with an indescribable purifying influence upon the air, the wretched cottages, the heaps of refuse, and the unkempt little crew.

The soldier asked whether it was possible to obtain a cup of milk. All the answer the girl made him was a hoarse cry. An old woman suddenly appeared on the threshold of one of the cabins, and the young peasant girl passed on into a cow-shed, with a gesture that pointed out the aforesaid old woman, towards whom Genestas went; taking care at the same time to keep a tight hold on his horse, lest the children who already were running about under his hoofs should

be hurt. He repeated his request, with which the housewife flatly refused to comply. She would not, she said, disturb the cream on the pans full of milk from which butter was to be made. The officer overcame this objection by undertaking to repay her amply for the wasted cream, and then tied up his horse at the door, and went inside the cottage.

The four children belonging to the woman all appeared to be of the same age—an odd circumstance which struck the commandant. A fifth clung about her skirts; a weak, pale, sickly-looking child, who doubtless needed more care than the others, and who on that account was the best beloved, the Benjamin of the family.

Genestas seated himself in a corner by the fireless hearth. A sublime symbol met his eyes on the high mantleshef above him—a colored plaster cast of the Virgin with the Child Jesus in her arms. Bare earth made the flooring of the cottage. It had been beaten level in the first instance, but in course of time it had grown rough and uneven, so that though it was clean, its ruggedness was not unlike that of the magnified rind of an orange. A sabot filled with salt, a frying-pan, and a large kettle hung inside the chimney. The farther end of the room was completely filled by a four-post bedstead, with a scalloped valance for decoration. The walls were black; there was an opening to admit the light above the worm-eaten door; and here and there were a few stools consisting of rough blocks of beechwood, each set upon three wooden legs; a hutch for bread, a large wooden dipper, a bucket and some earthen milk-pans, a spinning wheel on the top of the bread-hutch, and a few wicker mats for draining cheeses. Such were the ornaments and household furniture of the wretched dwelling.

The officer, who had been absorbed in flicking his riding-whip against the floor, presently became a witness to a piece of by-play, all unsuspecting though he was that any drama was about to unfold itself. No sooner had the old woman, followed by her scald-headed Benjamin, disappeared through a door that led into her dairy, than the four children, after having stared at the soldier as long as they wished, drove away the pig by way of a beginning. This



animal, their accustomed playmate, having come as far as the threshold, the little brats made such an energetic attack upon him, that he was forced to beat a hasty retreat. When the enemy had been driven without, the children besieged the latch of a door that gave way before their united efforts, and slipped out of the worn staple that held it; and finally they bolted into a kind of fruit-loft, where they very soon fell to munching the dried plums, to the amusement of the commandant, who watched this spectacle. The old woman, with the face like parchment and the dirty ragged clothing, came back at this moment, with a jug of milk for her visitor in her hand.

"Oh! you good-for-nothings!" cried she.

She ran to the children, clutched an arm of each child, bundled them into the room, and carefully closed the door of her storehouse of plenty. But she did not take their prunes away from them.

"Now, then, be good, my pets! If one did not look after them," she went on, looking at Genestas, "they would eat up the whole lot of prunes, the madcaps!"

Then she seated herself on a three-legged stool, drew the little weakling between her knees, and began to comb and wash his head with a woman's skill and with motherly assiduity. The four small thieves hung about. Some of them stood, others leant against the bed or the bread-hutch. They gnawed their prunes without saying a word, but they kept their sly and mischievous eyes fixed upon the stranger. In spite of grimy countenances and noses that stood in need of wiping, they all looked strong and healthy.

"Are they your children?" the soldier asked the old woman.

"Asking your pardon, sir, they are charity-children. They give me three francs a month and a pound's weight of soap for each of them."

"But it must cost you twice as much as that to keep them, good woman?"

"That is just what M. Benassis tells me, sir: but if other folk will board the children for the same money, one has to make it do. Nobody wants the children, but for all that

there is a good deal of performance to go through before they will let us have them. When the milk we give them comes to nothing, they cost us scarcely anything. Besides that, three francs is a great deal, sir; there are fifteen francs coming in, to say nothing of the five pounds' weight of soap. In our part of the world you would simply have to wear your life out before you would make ten sous a day."

"Then you have some land of your own?" asked the commandant.

"No, sir. I had some land once when my husband was alive; since he died I have done so badly that I had to sell it."

"Why, how do you reach the year's end without debts?" Genestas went on, "when you bring up children for a livelihood and wash and feed them on two sous a day?"

"Well, we never get to St. Sylvester's Day without debt, sir." She went on without ceasing to comb the child's hair. "But so it is—Providence helps us out. I have a couple of cows. Then my daughter and I do some gleanings at harvest-time, and in winter we pick up firewood. Then at night we spin. Ah! we never want to see another winter like this last one, that is certain! I owe the miller seventy-five francs for flour. Luckily he is M. Benassis's miller. M. Benassis, ah! he is a friend to poor people. He has never asked for his due from anybody, and he will not begin with us. Besides, our cow has a calf, and that will set us a bit straighter."

The four orphans for whom the old woman's affection represented all human guardianship had come to an end of their prunes. As their foster-mother's attention was taken up by the officer with whom she was chatting, they seized the opportunity, and banded themselves together in a compact file, so as to make yet another assault upon the latch of the door that stood between them and the tempting heap of dried plums. They advanced to the attack, not like French soldiers, but as stealthily as Germans, impelled by frank animal greediness.

"Oh! you little rogues! Do you want to finish them up?"

The old woman rose, caught the strongest of the four,

administered a gentle slap on the back, and flung him out of the house. Not a tear did he shed, but the others remained breathless with astonishment.

"They give you a lot of trouble——"

"Oh no, sir, but they can smell the prunes, the little dears. If I were to leave them alone here for a moment, they would stuff themselves with them."

"You are very fond of them?"

The old woman raised her head at this, and looked at him with gentle malice in her eyes.

"Fond of them!" she said. "I have had to part with three of them already. I only have the care of them until they are six years old," she went on with a sigh.

"But where are your own children?"

"I have lost them."

"How old are you?" Genestas asked, to efface the impression left by his last question.

"I am thirty-eight years old, sir. It will be two years come next St. John's Day since my husband died."

She finished dressing the poor sickly mite, who seemed to thank her by a loving look in his faded eyes.

"What a life of toil and self-denial!" thought the cavalry officer.

Beneath a roof worthy of the stable wherein Jesus Christ was born, the hardest duties of motherhood were fulfilled cheerfully and without consciousness of merit. What hearts were these that lay so deeply buried in neglect and obscurity! What wealth, and what poverty! Soldiers, better than other men, can appreciate the element of grandeur to be found in heroism in sabots, in the Evangel clad in rags. The Book may be found elsewhere, adorned, embellished, tricked out in silk and satin and brocade, but here, of a surety, dwelt the spirit of the Book. It was impossible to doubt that Heaven had some holy purpose underlying it all, at the sight of the woman who had taken a mother's lot upon herself—as Jesus Christ had taken the form of a man—who gleaned and suffered and ran into debt for her little waifs; a woman who defrauded herself in her reckonings, and would not own that she was ruining herself that she might be a Mother. One

was constrained to admit, at the sight of her, that the good upon earth have something in common with the angels in heaven; Commandant Genestas shook his head as he looked at her.

"Is M. Benassis a clever doctor?" he asked at last.

"I do not know, sir, but he cures poor people for nothing."

"It seems to me that this is a man and no mistake!" he went on, speaking to himself.

"Oh yes, sir, and a good man too! There is scarcely anyone hereabouts that does not put his name in their prayers, morning and night!"

"That is for you, mother," said the soldier, as he gave her several coins, "and that is for the children," he went on, as he added another crown. "Is M. Benassis's house still a long way off?" he asked, when he had mounted his horse.

"Oh no, sir, a bare league at most."

The commandant set out, fully persuaded that two leagues remained ahead of him. Yet after all he soon caught a glimpse through the trees of the little town's first cluster of houses, and then of all the roofs that crowded about a conical steeple, whose slates were secured to the angles of the wooden framework by sheets of tin that glittered in the sun. This sort of roof, which has a peculiar appearance, denotes the nearness of the borders of Savoy, where it is very common. The valley is wide at this particular point, and a fair number of houses pleasantly situated, either in the little plain or along the side of the mountain stream, lend human interest to the well-tilled spot, a stronghold with no apparent outlet among the mountains that surround it.

It was noon when Genestas reined in his horse beneath an avenue of elm-trees half-way up the hillside, and only a few paces from the town, to ask the group of children who stood before him for M. Benassis's house. At first the children looked at each other, then they scrutinized the stranger with the expression that they usually wear when they set eyes upon anything for the first time; a different curiosity and a different thought in every little face. Then the boldest

and merriest of the band, a little bright-eyed urchin, with bare, muddy feet, repeated his words over again, in child fashion.

“M. Benassis’s house, sir?” adding, “I will show you the way there.”

He walked along in front of the horse, prompted quite as much by a wish to gain a kind of importance by being in the stranger’s company, as by a child’s love of being useful, or the imperative craving to be doing something, that possesses mind and body at his age. The officer followed him for the entire length of the principal street of the country town. The way was paved with cobblestones, and wound in and out among the houses, which their owners had erected along its course in the most arbitrary fashion. In one place a bakehouse had been built out into the middle of the roadway; in another a gable protruded, partially obstructing the passage, and yet farther on a mountain stream flowed across it in a runnel. Genestas noticed a fair number of roofs of tarred shingle, but yet more of them were thatched; a few were tiled, and some seven or eight (belonging no doubt to the curé, the justice of the peace, and some of the wealthier townsmen) were covered with slates. There was a total absence of regard for appearances befitting a village at the end of the world, which had nothing beyond it, and no connection with any other place. The people who lived in it seemed to belong to one family that dwelt beyond the limits of the bustling world, with which the collector of taxes and a few ties of the very slenderest alone served to connect them.

When Genestas had gone a step or two farther, he saw on the mountain side a broad road that rose above the village. Clearly there must be an old town and a new town; and, indeed, when the commandant reached a spot where he could slacken the pace of his horse, he could easily see between the houses some well-built dwellings whose new roofs brightened the old-fashioned village. An avenue of trees rose above these new houses, and from among them came the confused sounds of several industries. He heard the songs peculiar to busy toilers, a murmur of many workshops, the

rasping of files, and the sound of falling hammers. He saw the thin lines of smoke from the chimneys of each household, and the more copious outpourings from the forges of the van-builder, the blacksmith, and the farrier. At length, at the very end of the village towards which his guide was taking him, Genestas beheld scattered farms and well-tilled fields and plantations of trees in thorough order. It might have been a little corner of Brie, so hidden away in a great fold of the land, that at first sight its existence would not be suspected between the little town and the mountains that closed the country round.

Presently the child stopped.

"There is the door of *his* house," he remarked.

The officer dismounted and passed his arm through the bridle. Then, thinking that the laborer is worthy of his hire, he drew a few sous from his waistcoat pocket, and held them out to the child, who looked astonished at this, opened his eyes very wide, and stayed on, without thanking him, to watch what the stranger would do next.

"Civilization has not made much headway hereabouts," thought Genestas; "the religion of work is in full force, and begging has not yet come thus far."

His guide, more from curiosity than from any interested motive, propped himself against the wall that rose to the height of a man's elbow. Upon this wall, which inclosed the yard belonging to the house, there ran a black wooden railing on either side of the square pillars of the gates. The lower part of the gates themselves was of solid wood that had been painted gray at some period in the past; the upper part consisted of a grating of yellowish spear-shaped bars. These decorations, which had lost all their color, gradually rose on either half of the gates till they reached the center where they met; their spikes, forming, when both leaves were shut, an outline similar to that of a pine-cone. The worm-eaten gates themselves, with their patches of velvet lichen, were almost destroyed by the alternate action of sun and rain. A few aloe plants and some chance-sown pellitory grew on the tops of the square pillars of the gates, which all but concealed the stems of a couple of thornless acacias

that raised their tufted spikes, like a pair of green powder-puffs, in the yard.

The condition of the gateway revealed a certain carelessness in its owner which did not seem to suit the officer's turn of mind. He knitted his brows like a man who is obliged to relinquish some illusion. We usually judge others by our own standard; and although we indulgently forgive our own shortcomings in them, we condemn them harshly for the lack of our special virtues. If the commandant had expected M. Benassis to be a methodical or practical man, there were unmistakable indications of absolute indifference as to his material concerns in the state of the gates of his house. A soldier possessed by Genestas's passion for domestic economy could not help at once drawing inferences as to the life and character of its owner from the gateway before him; and this, in spite of his habits of circumspection, he in nowise failed to do. The gates were left ajar, moreover—another piece of carelessness!

Encouraged by this countrified trust in all comers, the officer entered the yard without ceremony, and tethered his horse to the bars of the gate. While he was knotting the bridle, a neighing sound from the stable caused both horse and rider to turn their eyes involuntarily in that direction. The door opened, and an old servant put out his head. He wore a red woollen bonnet, exactly like the Phrygian cap in which Liberty is tricked out, a piece of head-gear in common use in this country.

As there was room for several horses, this worthy individual, after inquiring whether Genestas had come to see M. Benassis, offered the hospitality of the stable to the newly arrived steed, a very fine animal, at which he looked with an expression of admiring affection. The commandant followed his horse to see how things were to go with it. The stable was clean, there was plenty of litter, and there was the same peculiar air of sleek content about M. Benassis's pair of horses that distinguishes the curé's horse from all the rest of his tribe. A maid-servant from within the house came out upon the flight of steps and waited. She appeared to be the proper authority to whom the stranger's inquiries

were to be addressed, although the stableman had already told him that M. Benassis was not at home.

"The master has gone to the flour-mill," said he. "If you like to overtake him, you have only to go along the path that leads to the meadow; and the mill is at the end of it."

Genestas preferred seeing the country to waiting about indefinitely for Benassis's return, so he set out along the way that led to the flour-mill. When he had gone beyond the irregular line traced by the town upon the hillside, he came in sight of the mill and the valley, and of one of the loveliest landscapes that he had ever seen.

The mountains bar the course of the river, which forms a little lake at their feet, and raise their crests above it, tier on tier. Their many valleys are revealed by the changing hues of the light, or by the more or less clear outlines of the mountain ridges fledged with their dark forests of pines. The mill had not long been built. It stood just where the mountain stream fell into the little lake. There was all the charm about it peculiar to a lonely house surrounded by water and hidden away behind the heads of a few trees that love to grow by the water-side. On the farther bank of the river, at the foot of a mountain with a faint red glow of sunset upon its highest crest, Genestas caught a glimpse of a dozen deserted cottages. All the windows and doors had been taken away, and sufficiently large holes were conspicuous in the dilapidated roofs, but the surrounding land was laid out in fields that were highly cultivated, and the old garden spaces had been turned into meadows, watered by a system of irrigation as artfully contrived as that in use in Limousin. Unconsciously the commandant paused to look at the ruins of the village before him.

How is it that men can never behold any ruins, even of the humblest kind, without feeling deeply stirred? Doubtless it is because they seem to be a typical representation of evil fortune whose weight is felt so differently by different natures. The thought of death is called up by a churchyard, but a deserted village puts us in mind of the sorrows of life; death is but one misfortune always foreseen, but the



sorrows of life are infinite. Does not the thought of the infinite underlie all great melancholy?

The officer reached the stony path by the mill-pond before he could hit upon an explanation of this deserted village. The miller's lad was sitting on some sacks of corn near the door of the house. Genestas asked for M. Benassis.

"M. Benassis went over there," said the miller, pointing out one of the ruined cottages.

"Has the village been burnt down?" asked the commandant.

"No, sir."

"Then how did it come to be in this state?" inquired Genestas.

"Ah! how?" the miller answered, as he shrugged his shoulders and went indoors; "M. Benassis will tell you that."

The officer went over a rough sort of bridge built up of bowlders taken from the torrent bed, and soon reached the house that had been pointed out to him. The thatched roof of the dwelling was still entire; it was covered with moss indeed, but there were no holes in it, and the door and its fastenings seemed to be in good repair. Genestas saw a fire on the hearth as he entered, an old woman kneeling in the chimney-corner before a sick man seated in a chair, and another man, who was standing with his face turned toward the fireplace. The house consisted of a single room, which was lighted by a wretched window covered with linen cloth. The floor was of beaten earth; the chair, a table, and a truckle bed comprised the whole of the furniture. The commandant had never seen anything so poor and bare, not even in Russia, where the moujiks' huts are like the dens of wild beasts. Nothing within it spoke of ordinary life; there were not even the simplest appliances for cooking food of the commonest description. It might have been a dog kennel without a drinking pan. But for the truckle bed, a smock-frock hanging from a nail, and some sabots filled with straw, which composed the invalid's entire wardrobe, this cottage would have looked as empty as the others. The aged peasant woman upon her knees was devoting all her

attention to keeping the sufferer's feet in a tub filled with a brown liquid. Hearing a footstep and the clank of spurs, which sounded strangely in ears accustomed to the plodding pace of country folk, the man turned towards Genestas. A sort of surprise, in which the old woman shared, was visible in his face.

"There is no need to ask if you are M. Benassis," said the soldier. "You will pardon me, sir, if, as a stranger impatient to see you, I have come to seek you on your field of battle, instead of awaiting you at your house. Pray do not disturb yourself; go on with what you are doing. When it is over, I will tell you the purpose of my visit."

Genestas half seated himself upon the edge of the table, and remained silent. The firelight shone more brightly in the room than the faint rays of the sun, for the mountain crests intercepted them, so that they seldom reached this corner of the valley. A few branches of resinous pinewood made a bright blaze, and it was by the light of this fire that the soldier saw the face of the man towards whom he was drawn by a secret motive, by a wish to seek him out, to study and to know him thoroughly well. M. Benassis, the local doctor, heard Genestas with indifference, and with folded arms he returned his bow, and went back to his patient, quite unaware that he was being subjected to a scrutiny as earnest as that which the soldier turned upon him.

Benassis was a man of ordinary height, broad shouldered and deep chested. A capacious green overcoat, buttoned up to the chin, prevented the officer from observing any characteristic details of his personal appearance; but his dark and motionless figure served as a strong relief to his face, which caught the bright light of the blazing fire. The face was not unlike that of a satyr; there was the same slightly protruding forehead, full, in this case, of prominences, all more or less denoting character; the same turned-up nose, with a sprightly cleavage at the tip; the same high cheekbones. The lines of the mouth were crooked; the lips, thick and red. The chin turned sharply upwards. There was an alert, animated look in the brown eyes, to which their pearly whites gave great brightness, and which expressed passions

now subdued. His iron-gray hair, the deep wrinkles in his face, the bushy eyebrows that had grown white already, the veins on his protuberant nose, the tanned face covered with red blotches, everything about him, in short, indicated a man of fifty and the hard work of his profession. The officer could come to no conclusion as to the capacity of the head, which was covered by a close cap; but hidden though it was, it seemed to him to be one of the square-shaped kind that gave rise to the expression "square-headed." Genestas was accustomed to read the indications that mark the features of men destined to do great things, since he had been brought into close relations with the energetic natures sought out by Napoleon; so he suspected that there must be some mystery in this life of obscurity, and said to himself as he looked at the remarkable face before him—

"How comes it that he is still a country doctor?"

When he had made a careful study of this countenance, that, in spite of its resemblance to other human faces, revealed an inner life nowise in harmony with a commonplace exterior, he could not help sharing the doctor's interest in his patient; and the sight of that patient completely changed the current of his thoughts.

Much as the old cavalry officer had seen in the course of his soldier's career, he felt a thrill of surprise and horror at the sight of a human face which could never have been lighted up with thought—a livid face in which a look of dumb suffering showed so plainly—the same look that is sometimes worn by a child too young to speak, and too weak to cry any longer; in short, it was the wholly animal face of an old dying *crétin*. The *crétin* was the one variety of the human species with which the commandant had not yet come in contact. At the sight of the deep, circular folds of skin on the forehead, the sodden, fish-like eyes, and the head, with its short, coarse, scantily growing hair—a head utterly divested of all the faculties of the senses—who would not have experienced, as Genestas did, an instinctive feeling of repulsion for a being that had neither the physical beauty of an animal nor the mental endowments of man, who was possessed of neither instinct nor reason, and who

had never heard nor spoken any kind of articulate speech? It seemed difficult to expend any regrets over the poor wretch now visibly drawing towards the very end of an existence which had not been life in any sense of the word; yet the old woman watched him with touching anxiety, and was rubbing his legs where the hot water did not reach them with as much tenderness as if he had been her husband. Benassis himself, after a close scrutiny of the dull eyes and corpse-like face, gently took the crétin's hand and felt his pulse.

"The bath is doing no good," he said, shaking his head; "let us put him to bed again."

He lifted the inert mass himself, and carried him across to the truckle bed, from whence, no doubt, he had just taken him. Carefully he laid him at full length, and straightened the limbs that were growing cold already, putting the head and hand in position, with all the heed that a mother could bestow upon her child.

"It is all over, death is very near," said Benassis, who remained standing by the bedside.

The old woman gazed at the dying form, with her hands on her hips. A few tears stole down her cheeks. Genestas remained silent. He was unable to explain to himself how it was that the death of a being that concerned him so little should affect him so much. Unconsciously he shared the feeling of boundless pity that these hapless creatures excite among the dwellers in the sunless valleys wherein Nature has placed them. This sentiment has degenerated into a kind of religious superstition in families to which crétins belong; but does it not spring from the most beautiful of Christian virtues—from charity, and from a belief in a reward hereafter, that most effectual support of our social system, and the one thought that enables us to endure our miseries? The hope of inheriting eternal bliss helps the relations of these unhappy creatures and all others round about them to exert on a large scale, and with sublime devotion, a mother's ceaseless protecting care over an apathetic creature who does not understand it in the first instance, and who in a little while forgets it all. Wonderful power

of religion! that has brought a blind beneficence to the aid of an equally blind misery. Wherever crétins exist, there is a popular belief that the presence of one of these creatures brings luck to a family—a superstition that serves to sweeten lives which, in the midst of a town population, would be condemned by a mistaken philanthropy to submit to the harsh discipline of an asylum. In the higher end of the valley of the Isère, where crétins are very numerous, they lead an out-of-door life with the cattle which they are taught to herd. There, at any rate, they are at large, and receive the reverence due to misfortune.

A moment later the village bell clinked at slow regular intervals, to acquaint the flock with the death of one of their number. In the sound that reached the cottage but faintly across the intervening space, there was a thought of religion which seemed to fill it with a melancholy peace. The tread of many feet echoed up the road, giving notice of an approaching crowd of people—a crowd that uttered not a word. Then suddenly the chanting of the Church broke the stillness, calling up the confused thoughts that take possession of the most skeptical minds, and compel them to yield to the influence of the touching harmonies of the human voice. The Church was coming to the aid of a creature that knew her not. The curé appeared, preceded by a choir-boy, who bore the crucifix, and followed by the sacristan carrying the vase of holy water, and by some fifty women, old men, and children, who had all come to add their prayers to those of the Church. The doctor and the soldier looked at each other, and silently withdrew to a corner to make room for the kneeling crowd within and without the cottage. During the consoling ceremony of the Viaticum, celebrated for one who had never sinned, but to whom the Church on earth was bidding a last farewell, there were signs of real sorrow on most of the rough faces of the gathering, and tears flowed over rugged cheeks that sun and wind and labor in the fields had tanned and wrinkled. The sentiment of voluntary kinship was easy to explain. There was not one in the place who had not pitied the unhappy creature, not one who would not have given him his daily bread. Had he

not met with a father's care from every child, and found a mother in the merriest little girl?

"He is dead," said the curé.

The words struck his hearers with the most unfeigned dismay. The tall candles were lighted, and several people undertook to watch with the dead that night. Benassis and the soldier went out. A group of peasants in the doorway stopped the doctor to say—

"Ah! if you have not saved his life, sir, it was doubtless because God wished to take him to Himself."

"I did my best, children," the doctor answered.

When they had come a few paces from the deserted village, whose last inhabitant had just died, the doctor spoke to Genestas.

"You would not believe, sir, what real solace is contained for me in what those peasants have just said. Ten years ago I was very nearly stoned to death in this village. It is empty to-day, but thirty families lived in it then."

Genestas's face and gesture so plainly expressed an inquiry that, as they went along, the doctor told him the story promised by this beginning.

"When I first settled here, sir, I found a dozen crétins in this part of the canton," and the doctor turned round to point out the ruined cottages for the officer's benefit. "All the favorable conditions for spreading the hideous disease are there; the air is stagnant, the hamlet lies in the valley bottom, close beside a torrent supplied with water by the melted snows, and the sunlight only falls on the mountain-top, so that the valley itself gets no good of the sun. Marriages among these unfortunate creatures are not forbidden by law, and in this district they are protected by superstitious notions, of whose power I had no conception—superstitions which I blamed at first, and afterwards came to admire. So crétinism was in a fair way to spread all over the valley from this spot. Was it not doing the country a great service to put a stop to this mental and physical contagion? But imperatively as the salutary changes were required, they might cost the life of any man who endeavored to bring them about. Here, as in other social spheres, if any good is to

be done, we come into collision not merely with vested interests, but with something far more dangerous to meddle with—religious ideas crystallized into superstitions, the most permanent form taken by human thought. I feared nothing.

“In the first place, I sought for the position of mayor in the canton, and in this I succeeded. Then, after obtaining verbal sanction from the prefect, and by paying down the money, I had several of these unfortunate creatures transported over to Aiguebelle, in Savoy, by night. There are a great many of them there, and they were certain to be very kindly treated. When this act of humanity came to be known, the whole countryside looked upon me as a monster. The curé preached against me. In spite of all the pains I took to explain to all the shrewder heads of the little place the immense importance of being rid of the idiots, and in spite of the fact that I gave my services gratuitously to the sick people of the district, a shot was fired at me from the corner of a wood.

“I went to the Bishop of Grenoble and asked him to change the curé. Monseigneur was good enough to allow me to choose a priest who would share in my labors, and it was my happy fortune to meet with one of those rare natures that seem to have dropped down from heaven. Then I went on with my enterprise. After preparing people’s minds, I made another transportation by night, and six more crétins were taken away. In this second attempt I had the support of several people to whom I had rendered some service, and I was backed by the members of the Communal Council, for I had appealed to their parsimonious instincts, showing them how much it cost to support the poor wretches, and pointing out how largely they might gain by converting their plots of ground (to which the idiots had no proper title) into allotments which were needed in the township.

“All the rich were on my side; but the poor, the old women, the children, and a few pig-headed people were violently opposed to me. Unluckily it so fell out that my last removal had not been completely carried out. The crétin whom you have just seen, not having returned to his house, had not been taken away, so that the next morning he was

the sole remaining example of his species in the village. There were several families still living there; but though they were little better than idiots, they were, at any rate, free from the taint of crétinism. I determined to go through with my work, and came officially in open day to take the luckless creature from his dwelling. I had no sooner left my house than my intention go' abroad. The crétin's friends were there before me, and in front of his hovel I found a crowd of women and children and old people, who hailed my arrival with insults accompanied by a shower of stones.

"In the midst of the uproar I should perhaps have fallen a victim to the frenzy that possesses a crowd excited by its own outcries and stirred up by one common feeling, but the crétin saved my life! The poor creature came out of his hut, and raised the clucking sound of his voice. He seemed to be an absolute ruler over the fanatical mob, for the sight of him put a sudden stop to the clamor. It occurred to me that I might arrange a compromise, and thanks to the quiet so opportunely restored, I was able to propose and explain it. Of course, those who approved of my schemes would not dare to second me in this emergency, their support was sure to be of a purely passive kind, while these superstitious folk would exert the most active vigilance to keep their last idol among them; it was impossible, it seemed to me, to take him away from them. So I promised to leave the crétin in peace in his dwelling, with the understanding that he should live quite by himself, and that the remaining families in the village should cross the stream and come to live in the town, in some new houses which I myself undertook to build, adding to each house a piece of ground for which the commune was to repay me later on.

"Well, my dear sir, it took me fully six months to overcome their objection to this bargain, however much it may have been to the advantage of the village families. The affection which they have for their wretched hovels in country districts is something quite unexplainable. No matter how unwholesome his hovel may be, a peasant clings far more to it than a banker does to his mansion. The reason of it? That I do not know. Perhaps thoughts and feelings are



strongest in those who have but few of them, simply because they have but few. Perhaps material things count for much in the lives of those who live so little in thought; certain it is that the less they have, the dearer their possessions are to them. Perhaps, too, it is with the peasant as with the prisoner—he does not squander the powers of his soul, he centers them all upon a single idea, and this is how his feelings come to be so exceedingly strong. Pardon these reflections on the part of a man who seldom exchanges ideas with anyone. But, indeed, you must not suppose, sir, that I am much taken up with these far-fetched considerations. We all have to be active and practical here.

“Alas! the fewer ideas these poor folk have in their heads, the harder it is to make them see where their real interests lie. There was nothing for it but to give my whole attention to every trifling detail of my enterprise. One and all made me the same answer, one of those sayings, filled with homely sense, to which there is no possible reply, ‘But your houses are not yet built, sir!’ they used to say. ‘Very good,’ said I, ‘promise me that, as soon as they are finished you will come and live in them.’

“Luckily, sir, I obtained a decision to the effect that the whole of the mountain side above the now deserted village was the property of the township. The sum of money brought in by the woods on the higher slopes paid for the building of the new houses and for the land on which they stood. They were built forthwith; and when once one of my refractory families was fairly settled in, the rest of them were not slow to follow. The benefits of the change were so evident that even the most bigoted believer in the village, which you might call soulless as well as sunless, could not but appreciate them. The final decision in this matter, which gave some property to the commune, in the possession of which we were confirmed by the Council of State, made me a person of great importance in the canton. But what a lot of worry there was over it!” the doctor remarked, stopping short, and raising a hand which he let fall again—a gesture that spoke volumes. “No one knows, as I do, the distance between the town and the Prefecture—whence nothing comes

out—and from the Prefecture to the Council of State—where nothing can be got in.

“Well, after all,” he resumed, “peace be to the powers of this world! They yielded to my importunities, and that is saying a great deal. If you only knew the good that came of a carelessly scrawled signature! Why, sir, two years after I had taken these momentous trifles in hand, and had carried the matter through to the end, every poor family in the commune had two cows at least, which they pastured on the mountain side, where (without waiting this time for an authorization from the Council of State) I had established a system of irrigation by means of cross trenches, like those in Switzerland, Auvergne, and Limousin. Much to their astonishment, the townspeople saw some capital meadows springing up under their eyes, and thanks to the improvement in the pasturage, the yield of milk was very much larger. The results of this triumph were great indeed. Everyone followed the example set by my system of irrigation; cattle were multiplied; the area of meadow land and every kind of out-turn increased. I had nothing to fear after that. I could continue my efforts to improve this, as yet, untilled corner of the earth; and to civilize those who dwelt in it, whose minds had hitherto lain dormant.

“Well, sir, folk like us, who live out of the world, are very talkative. If you ask us a question, there is no knowing where the answer will come to an end; but to cut it short,—there were about seven hundred souls in the valley when I came to it, and now the population numbers some two thousand. I had gained the good opinion of everyone in that matter of the last *crétin*; and when I had constantly shown that I could rule both mildly and firmly, I became a local oracle. I did everything that I could to win their confidence; I did not ask for it, nor did I appear to seek it; but I tried to inspire everyone with the deepest respect for my character, by the scrupulous way in which I always fulfilled my engagements, even when they were of the most trifling kind. When I had pledged myself to the care of the poor creature whose death you have just witnessed, I looked after him much more effectually than any of his previous guardians had done.

He has been fed and cared for as the adopted child of the commune. After a time the dwellers in the valley ended by understanding the service which I had done them in spite of themselves, but for all that, they still cherish some traces of that old superstition of theirs. Far be it from me to blame them for it; has not their cult of the crétin often furnished me with an argument when I have tried to induce those who had possession of their faculties to help the unfortunate? But here we are," said Benassis, when after a moment's pause he saw the roof of his own house.

Far from expecting the slightest expression of praise or of thanks from his listener, it appeared from his way of telling the story of this episode in his administrative career, that he had been moved by an unconscious desire to pour out the thoughts that filled his mind, after the manner of folk that live very retired lives.

"I have taken the liberty of putting my horse in your stable, sir," said the commandant, "for which in your goodness you will perhaps pardon me when you learn the object of my journey hither."

"Ah! yes, what is it?" asked Benassis, appearing to shake off his preoccupied mood, and to recollect that his companion was a stranger to him. The frankness and unreserve of his nature had led him to accept Genestas as an acquaintance.

"I have heard of the almost miraculous recovery of M. Gravier of Grenoble, whom you received into your house," was the soldier's answer. "I have come to you, hoping that you will give a like attention to my case, although I have not a similar claim to your benevolence; and yet, I am possibly not undeserving of it. I am an old soldier, and wounds of long standing give me no peace. It will take you at least a week to study my condition, for the pain only comes back at intervals, and——"

"Very good, sir," Benassis broke in; "M. Gravier's room is in readiness. Come in."

They went into the house, the doctor flinging open the door with an eagerness that Genestas attributed to his pleasure at receiving a boarder.

"Jacquotte!" Benassis called out. "This gentleman will dine with us."

"But would it not be as well for us to settle about the payment?"

"Payment for what?" inquired the doctor.

"For my board. You cannot keep me and my horse as well, without——"

"If you are wealthy, you will repay me amply," Benassis replied; "and if you are not, I will take nothing whatever."

"Nothing whatever seems to me to be too dear," said Genestas. "But, rich or poor, will ten francs a day (not including your professional services) be acceptable to you?"

"Nothing could be less acceptable to me than payment for the pleasure of entertaining a visitor," the doctor answered, knitting his brows; "and as to my advice, you shall have it if I like you, and not unless. Rich people shall not have my time by paying for it; it belongs exclusively to the folk here in the valley. I do not care about fame or fortune, and I look for neither praise nor gratitude from my patients. Any money which you may pay me will go to the druggists in Grenoble, to pay for the medicine required by the poor of the neighborhood."

Anyone who heard the words flung out, abruptly, it is true, but without a trace of bitterness in them, would have said to himself with Genestas, "Here is a man made of good human clay."

"Well, then, I will pay you ten francs a day, sir," the soldier answered, returning to the charge with wonted pertinacity, "and you will do as you choose after that. We shall understand each other better, now that the question is settled," he added, grasping the doctor's hand with eager cordiality. "In spite of my ten francs, you shall see that I am by no means a Tartar."

After this passage of arms, in which Benassis showed not the slightest sign of a wish to appear generous or to pose as a philanthropist, the supposed invalid entered his doctor's house. Everything within it was in keeping with the ruinous state of the gateway, and with the clothing worn by its owner. There was an utter disregard for everything

not essentially useful, which was visible even in the smallest trifles. Benassis took Genestas through the kitchen, that being the shortest way to the dining-room.

Had the said kitchen belonged to an inn, it could not have been more smoke-begrimed; and if there was a sufficiency of cooking pots within its precincts, this lavish supply was Jacquotte's doing—Jacquotte who had formerly been the curé's housekeeper—Jacquotte who always said "we," and who ruled supreme over the doctor's household. If, for instance, there was a brightly polished warming-pan above the mantle-shelf, it probably hung there because Jacquotte liked to sleep warm of a winter night, which led her incidentally to warm her master's sheets. He never took a thought about anything; so she was wont to say.

It was on account of a defect, which anyone else would have found intolerable, that Benassis had taken her into his service. Jacquotte had a mind to rule the house, and a woman who would rule his house was the very person that the doctor wanted. So Jacquotte bought and sold, made alterations about the place, set up and took down, arranged and disarranged everything at her own sweet will; her master had never raised a murmur. Over the yard, the stable, the man-servant and the kitchen, in fact, over the whole house and garden and its master, Jacquotte's sway was absolute. She looked out fresh linen, saw to the washing, and laid in provisions without consulting anybody. She decided everything that went on in the house, and the date when the pigs were to be killed. She scolded the gardener, decreed the menu at breakfast and dinner, and went from cellar to garret, and from garret to cellar, setting everything to rights according to her notions, without a word of opposition of any sort or description. Benassis had made but two stipulations—he wished to dine at six o'clock, and that the household expenses should not exceed a certain fixed sum every month.

A woman whom everyone obeys in this way is always singing, so Jacquotte laughed and warbled on the staircase; she was always humming something when she was not singing, and singing when she was not humming. Jacquotte had a

natural liking for cleanliness, so she kept the house neat and clean. If her tastes had been different, it would have been a sad thing for M. Benassis (so she was wont to say), for the poor man was so little particular that you might feed him on cabbage for partridges, and he would not find it out; and if it were not for her, he would very often wear the same shirt for a week on end. Jacquotte, however, was an indefatigable folder of linen, a born rubber and polisher of furniture, and a passionate lover of a perfectly religious and ceremonial cleanliness of the most scrupulous, the most radiant, and most fragrant kind. A sworn foe to dust, she swept and scoured and washed without ceasing.

The condition of the gateway caused her acute distress. On the first day of every month for the past ten years, she had extorted from her master a promise that he would replace the gate with a new one, that the walls of the house should be lime-washed, and that everything should be made quite straight and proper about the place; but so far, the master had not kept his word. So it happened that whenever she fell to lamenting over Benassis's deeply-rooted carelessness about things, she nearly always ended solemnly in these words, with which all her praises of her master usually terminated—

“You cannot say that he is a fool, because he works such miracles, as you may say, in the place; but, all the same, he is a fool at times, such a fool that you have to do everything for him as if he were a child.”

Jacquotte loved the house as if it had belonged to her; and when she had lived in it for twenty-two years, had she not some grounds for deluding herself on that head? After the curé's death the house had been for sale; and Benassis, who had only just come into the country, had bought it as it stood, with the walls about it and the ground belonging to it, together with the plate, wine, and furniture, the old sundial, the poultry, the horse, and the woman-servant. Jacquotte was the very pattern of a working housekeeper, with her clumsy figure, and her bodice, always of the same dark brown print with large red spots on it, which fitted her so tightly that it looked as if the material must give

way if she moved at all. Her colorless face, with its double chin, looked out from under a round plaited cap, which made her look paler than she really was. She talked incessantly, and always in a loud voice—this short, active woman, with the plump, busy hands. Indeed, if Jacquotte was silent for a moment, and took a corner of her apron so as to turn it up in a triangle, it meant that a lengthy expostulation was about to be delivered for the benefit of master or man. Jacquotte was beyond all doubt the happiest cook in the kingdom; for, that nothing might be lacking in a measure of felicity as great as may be known in this world below, her vanity was continually gratified—the townspeople regarded her as an authority of an indefinite kind, and ranked her somewhere between the mayor and the park-keeper.

The master of the house found nobody in the kitchen when he entered it.

"Where the devil are they all gone?" he asked. "Pardon me for bringing you in this way," he went on, turning to Genestas. "The front entrance opens into the garden, but I am so little accustomed to receive visitors that—Jacquotte!" he called in rather peremptory tones.

A woman's voice answered to the name from the interior of the house. A moment later Jacquotte, assuming the offensive, called in her turn to Benassis, who forthwith went into the dining-room.

"Just like you, sir!" she exclaimed; "you never do like anybody else. You always ask people to dinner without telling me beforehand, and you think that everything is settled as soon as you have called for Jacquotte! You are not going to have the gentleman sit in the kitchen, are you? Is not the salon to be unlocked and a fire to be lighted? Nicolle is there, and will see after everything. Now take the gentleman into the garden for a minute; that will amuse him; if he likes to look at pretty things, show him the arbor of hornbeam trees that the poor dear old gentleman made. I shall have time then to lay the cloth, and to get everything ready, the dinner and the salon too."

"Yes. But, Jacquotte," Benassis went on, "the gentleman is going to stay with us. Do not forget to give a

look round M. Gravier's room, and see about the sheets and things, and——"

"Now you are not going to interfere about the sheets, are you?" asked Jacquette. "If he is to sleep here, I know what must be done for him perfectly well. You have not so much as set foot in M. Gravier's room these ten months past. There is nothing to see there, the place is as clean as a new pin. Then will the gentleman make some stay here?" she continued in a milder tone.

"Yes."

"How long will he stay?"

"Faith, I do not know. What does it matter to you?"

"What does it matter to me, sir? Oh! very well, what does it matter to me? Did anyone ever hear the like! And the provisions and all that, and——"

At any other time she would have overwhelmed her master with reproaches for his breach of trust, but now she followed him into the kitchen before the torrent of words had come to an end. She had guessed that there was a prospect of a boarder, and was eager to see Genestas, to whom she made a very deferential courtesy, while she scanned him from head to foot. A thoughtful and dejected expression gave a harsh look to the soldier's face. In the dialogue between master and servant the former had appeared to him in the light of a nonentity; and although he regretted the fact, this revelation had lessened the high opinion that he had formed of the man whose persistent efforts to save the district from the horrors of crétinism had won his admiration.

"I do not like the looks of that fellow at all!" said Jacquette to herself.

"If you are not tired, sir," said the doctor to his supposed patient, "we will take a turn round the garden before dinner."

"Willingly," answered the commandant.

They went through the dining-room, and reached the garden by way of a sort of vestibule at the foot of the staircase between the salon and the dining-room. Beyond a great glass door at the farther end of the vestibule lay a flight of stone steps which adorned the garden side of



the house. The garden itself was divided into four large squares of equal size by two paths that intersected each other in the form of a cross, a box edging along their sides. At the farther end there was a thick, green alley of hornbeam trees, which had been the joy and pride of the late owner. The soldier seated himself on a worm-eaten bench, and saw neither the trellis-work nor the espaliers, nor the vegetables of which Jacquotte took such great care. She followed the traditions of the epicurean churchman to whom this valuable garden owed its origin; but Benassis himself regarded it with sufficient indifference.

The commandant turned their talk from the trivial matters which had occupied them by saying to the doctor—

“How comes it, sir, that the population of the valley has been trebled in ten years? There were seven hundred souls in it when you came, and to-day you say that they number more than two thousand.”

“You are the first person who has put that question to me,” the doctor answered. “Though it has been my aim to develop the capabilities of this little corner of the earth to the utmost, the constant pressure of a busy life has not left me time to think over the way in which (like the mendicant brother) I have made ‘broth from a flint’ on a large scale. M. Gravier himself, who is one of several who have done a great deal for us, and to whom I was able to render a service by re-establishing his health, has never given a thought to the theory, though he has been everywhere over our mountain sides with me, to see its practical results.”

There was a moment’s silence, during which Benassis followed his own thoughts, careless of the keen glance by which his guest tried to fathom him.

“You ask how it came about, my dear sir?” the doctor resumed. “It came about quite naturally through the working of the social law by which the need and means of supplying it are correlated. Herein lies the whole story. Races who have no wants are always poor. When I first came to live here in this township, there were about a hundred and thirty peasant families in it, and some two hundred hearths in the valley. The local authorities were such as

might be expected in the prevailing wretchedness of the population. The mayor himself could not write, and the deputy-mayor was a small farmer, who lived beyond the limits of the commune. The justice of the peace was a poor devil who had nothing but his salary, and who was forced to relinquish the registration of births, marriages, and deaths to his clerk, another hapless wretch who was scarcely able to understand his duties. The old curé had died at the age of seventy, and his curate, a quite uneducated man, had just succeeded to his position. These people comprised all the intelligence of the district over which they ruled.

“Those who dwelt amidst these lovely natural surroundings groveled in squalor and lived upon potatoes, milk, butter, and cheese. The only produce that brought in any money was the cheese, which most of them carried in small baskets to Grenoble or its outskirts. The richer or the more energetic among them sowed buckwheat for home consumption; sometimes they raised a crop of barley or oats, but wheat was unknown. The only trader in the place was the mayor, who owned a sawmill and bought up timber at a low price to sell again. In the absence of roads, his tree trunks had to be transported during the summer season; each log was dragged along one at a time, and with no small difficulty, by means of a chain attached to a halter about his horse’s neck, and an iron hook at the farther end of the chain, which was driven into the wood. Anyone who went to Grenoble, whether on horseback or afoot, was obliged to follow a track high up on the mountain side, for the valley was quite impassable. The pretty road between this place and the first village that you reach as you come into the canton (the way along which you must have come) was nothing but a slough at all seasons of the year.

“Political events and revolutions had never reached this inaccessible country—it lay completely beyond the limits of social stir and change. Napoleon’s name, and his alone, had penetrated hither; he is held in great veneration, thanks to one or two old soldiers who have returned to their native homes, and who of evenings tell marvelous tales about his adventures and his armies for the benefit of these simple

folk. Their coming back is, moreover, a puzzle that no one can explain. Before I came here, the young men who went into the army all stayed in it for good. This fact in itself is a sufficient revelation of the wretched condition of the country. I need not give you a detailed description of it.

“This, then, was the state of things when I first came to the canton, which has several contented, well-tilled, and fairly prosperous communes belonging to it upon the other side of the mountains. I will say nothing about the hovels in the town; they were neither more nor less than stables, in which men and animals were indiscriminately huddled together. As there was no inn in the place, I was obliged to ask the curate for a bed, he being in possession, for the time being, of this house, then offered for sale. Putting to him question after question, I came to have some slight knowledge of the lamentable condition of the country with the pleasant climate, the fertile soil, and the natural productiveness that had impressed me so much.

“At that time, sir, I was seeking to shape a future for myself that should be as little as possible like the troubled life that had left me weary; and one of those thoughts came into my mind that God gives to us at times, to enable us to take up our burdens and bear them. I resolved to develop all the resources of this country, just as a tutor develops the capacities of a child. Do not think too much of my benevolence; the pressing need that I felt for turning my thoughts into fresh channels entered too much into my motives. I had determined to give up the remainder of my life to some difficult task. A lifetime would be required to bring about the needful changes in a canton that Nature had made so wealthy, and man so poor; and I was tempted by the practical difficulties that stood in the way. As soon as I found that I could secure the curé’s house and plenty of waste land at a small cost, I solemnly devoted myself to the calling of a country surgeon—the very last position that a man aspires to take. I determined to become the friend of the poor, and to expect no reward of any kind from them. Oh! I did not indulge in any illusions as to the nature of the country people, nor as to the hindrances that

lie in the way of every attempt to bring about a better state of things among men or their surroundings. I have never made idyllic pictures of my people; I have taken them at their just worth—as poor peasants, neither wholly good nor wholly bad, whose constant toil never allows them to indulge in emotion, though they can feel acutely at times. Above all things, in fact, I clearly understood that I should do nothing with them except through an appeal to their selfish interests, and by schemes for their immediate wellbeing. The peasants are one and all the sons of St. Thomas, the doubting apostle—they always like words to be supported by visible facts.

“Perhaps you will laugh at my first start, sir,” the doctor went on after a pause. “I began my difficult enterprise by introducing the manufacture of baskets. The poor folk used to buy the wicker mats on which they drain their cheeses, and all the baskets needed for the insignificant trade of the district. I suggested to an intelligent young fellow that he might take on lease a good-sized piece of land by the side of the torrent. Every year the floods deposited a rich alluvial soil on this spot, where there should be no difficulty in growing osiers. I reckoned out the quantity of wicker-work of various kinds required from time to time by the canton, and went over to Grenoble, where I found out a young craftsman, a clever worker, but without any capital. When I had discovered him, I soon made up my mind to set him up in business here. I undertook to advance the money for the osiers required for his work until my osier-farmer should be in a position to supply him. I induced him to sell his baskets at rather lower prices than they asked for them in Grenoble, while, at the same time, they were better made. He entered into my views completely. The osier-beds and the basket-making were two business speculations whose results were only appreciated after the lapse of four years. Of course, you know that osiers must be three years old before they are fit to cut.

“At the commencement of operations, the basket-maker was boarded and lodged gratuitously. Before very long he married a woman from Saint Laurent du Pont, who had a little money. Then he had a house built, in a healthy and

very airy situation which I chose, and my advice was followed as to the internal arrangements. Here was a triumph! I had created a new industry, and had brought a producer and several workers into the town. I wonder if you will regard my elation as childish?

“For the first few days after my basket-maker had set up his business, I never went past his shop but my heart beat somewhat faster. And when I saw the newly-built house, with the green-painted shutters, the vine beside the doorway, and the bench and bundles of osiers before it; when I saw a tidy, neatly-dressed woman within it, nursing a plump, pink and white baby among the workmen, who were singing merrily and busily plaiting their wicker-work under the superintendence of a man who but lately had looked so pinched and pale, but now had an atmosphere of prosperity about him; when I saw all this, I confess that I could not forego the pleasure of turning basket-maker for a moment, of going into the shop to hear how things went with them, and of giving myself up to a feeling of content that I cannot express in words, for I had all their happiness as well as my own to make me glad. All my hopes became centered on this house, where the man dwelt who had been the first to put a steady faith in me. Like the basket-maker’s wife, clasping her first nursling to her breast, did not I already fondly cherish the hopes of the future of this poor district?

“I had to do so many things at once,” he went on, “I came into collision with other people’s notions, and met with violent opposition, fomented by the ignorant mayor to whose office I had succeeded, and whose influence had dwindled away as mine increased. I determined to make him my deputy, and a confederate in my schemes of benevolence. Yes, in the first place, I endeavored to instill enlightened ideas into the densest of all heads. Through his self-love and cupidity I gained a hold upon my man. During six months, as we dined together, I took him deeply into my confidence about my projected improvements. Many people would think this intimacy one of the most painful inflictions in the course of my task; but was he not a tool of the most

valuable kind? Woe to him who despises his ax, or flings it carelessly aside! Would it not have been very inconsistent, moreover, if I, who wished to improve a district, had shrunk back at the thought of improving one man in it?

“A road was our first and most pressing need in bringing about a better state of things. If we could obtain permission from the Municipal Council to make a hard road, so as to put us in communication with the highway to Grenoble, the deputy-mayor would be the first gainer by it; for instead of dragging his timber over rough tracks at a great expense, a good road through the canton would enable him to transport it more easily, and to engage in a traffic on a large scale, in all kinds of wood, that would bring in money—not a miserable six hundred francs a year, but handsome sums which would mean a certain fortune for him some day. Convinced at last, he became my proselytizer.

“Through the whole of one winter the ex-mayor got into the way of explaining to our citizens that a good road for wheeled traffic would be a source of wealth to the whole country round, for it would enable everyone to do a trade with Grenoble; he held forth on this head at the tavern while drinking with his intimates. When the Municipal Council had authorized the making of the road, I went to the prefect and obtained some money from the charitable funds at the disposal of the department, in order to pay for the hire of carts, for the commune was unable to undertake the transport of road metal for lack of wheeled conveyances. The ignorant began to murmur against me, and to say that I wanted to bring the days of the *corvée* back again; this made me anxious to finish this important work, that they might speedily appreciate its benefits. With this end in view, every Sunday during my first year of office I drew the whole population of the township, willing or unwilling, up to the mountain, where I myself had traced out on a hard bottom the road between our village and the highway to Grenoble. Materials for making it were fortunately to be had in plenty all along the site.

“The tedious enterprise called for a great deal of patience on my part. Some who were ignorant of the law would

refuse at times to give their contribution of labor; others, again, who had not bread to eat, really could not afford to lose a day. Corn had to be distributed among these last, and the others must be soothed with friendly words. Yet by the time we had finished two-thirds of the road, which in all is about two leagues in length, the people had so thoroughly recognized its advantages, that the remaining third was accomplished with a spirit that surprised me. I added to the future wealth of the commune by planting a double row of poplars along the ditch on either side of the way. The trees are already almost worth a fortune, and they make our road look like a king's highway. It is almost always dry, by reason of its position, and it was so well made that the annual cost of maintaining it is a bare two hundred francs. I must show it to you, for you cannot have seen it; you must have come by the picturesque way along the valley bottom, a road which the people decided to make for themselves three years later, so as to connect the various farms that were made there at that time. In three years ideas had rooted themselves in the common-sense of this township, hitherto so lacking in intelligence that a passing traveler would perhaps have thought it hopeless to attempt to instill them. But to continue.

"The establishment of the basket-maker was an example set before these poverty-stricken folk that they might profit by it. And if the road was to be a direct cause of the future wealth of the canton, all the primary forms of industry must be stimulated, or these two germs of a better state of things would come to nothing. My own work went forward by slow degrees, as I helped my osier farmer and wicker-worker and saw to the making of the road.

"I had two horses, and the timber merchant, the deputy-mayor, had three. He could only have them shod whenever he went over to Grenoble, so I induced a farrier to take up his abode here, and undertook to find him plenty of work. On the same day I met with a discharged soldier, who had nothing but his pension of a hundred francs, and was sufficiently perplexed about his future. He could read and write, so I engaged him as secretary to the mayor; as it

happened, I was lucky enough to find a wife for him, and his dreams of happiness were fulfilled.

"As both of these new families needed houses, as well as the basket-maker and twenty-two others from the crétin village, soon afterwards twelve more households were established in the place. The workers in each of these families were at once producers and consumers. They were masons, carpenters, joiners, slaters, blacksmiths, and glaziers; and there was work enough to last them for a long time, for had they not their own houses to build when they had finished those for other people? Seventy, in fact, were built in the commune during my second year of office. One form of production demands another. The additions to the population of the township had created fresh wants, hitherto unknown among these dwellers in poverty. The wants gave rise to industries, and industries to trade, and the gains of trade raised the standard of comfort, which in its turn gave them practical ideas.

"The various workmen wished to buy their bread ready baked, so we came to have a baker. Buckwheat could no longer be the food of a population which, awakened from its lethargy, had become essentially active. They lived on buckwheat when I first came among them, and I wished to effect a change to rye, or a mixture of rye and wheat in the first instance, and finally to see a loaf of white bread even in the poorest household. Intellectual progress to my thinking was entirely dependent on a general improvement in the conditions of life. The presence of a butcher in a district says as much for its intelligence as for its wealth. The worker feeds himself, and a man who feeds himself thinks. I had made a very careful study of the soil, for I foresaw a time when it would be necessary to grow wheat. I was sure of launching the place on a very prosperous agricultural career, and of doubling the population, when once it had begun to work. And now the time had come.

"M. Gravier, of Grenoble, owned a great deal of land in the commune, which brought him in no rent, but which might be turned into corn-growing land. He is the head of a department in the Prefecture, as you know. It was a kindness



for his own countryside quite as much as my earnest entreaties that won him over. He had very benevolently yielded to my importunities on former occasions, and I succeeded in making it clear to him that in so doing he had wrought unconsciously for his own benefit. After several days spent in pleadings, consultation, and talk, the matter was thrashed out. I undertook to guarantee him against all risks in the undertaking, from which his wife, a woman of no imagination, sought to frighten him. He agreed to build four farm-houses with a hundred acres of land attached to each, and promised to advance the sums required to pay for clearing the ground, for seeds, plowing gear, and cattle, and for making occupation roads.

"I myself also started two farms, quite as much for the sake of bringing my waste land into cultivation as with a view to giving an object-lesson in the use of modern methods in agriculture. In six weeks' time the population of the town increased to three hundred people. Homes for several families must be built on the six farms; there was a vast quantity of land to be broken up; the work called for laborers. Wheelwrights, drainmakers, journeymen, and laborers of all kinds flocked in. The road to Grenoble was covered with carts that came and went. All the countryside was astir. The circulation of money had made everyone anxious to earn it, apathy had ceased, the place had awakened.

"The story of M. Gravier, one of those who did so much for this canton, can be concluded in a few words. In spite of cautious misgivings, not unnatural in a man occupying an official position in a provincial town, he advanced more than forty thousand francs, on the faith of my promises, without knowing whether he should ever see them back again. To-day every one of his farms is let for a thousand francs. His tenants have thriven so well that each of them owns at least a hundred acres, three hundred sheep, twenty cows, ten oxen, and five horses, and employs more than twenty persons.

"But to resume. Our farms were ready by the end of the fourth year. Our wheat harvest seemed miraculous to

the people in the district, heavy as the first crop off the land ought to be. How often during that year I trembled for the success of my work! Rain or drought might spoil everything by diminishing the belief in me that was already felt. When we began to grow wheat, it necessitated the mill that you have seen, which brings me in about five hundred francs a year. So the peasants say that 'there is luck about me' (that is the way they put it), and believe in me as they believe in their relics. These new undertakings—the farms, the mill, the plantations, and the roads—have given employment to all the various kinds of workers whom I had called in. Although the buildings fully represent the value of the sixty thousand francs of capital, which we sunk in the district, the outlay was more than returned to us by the profits on the sales which the consumers occasioned. I never ceased my efforts to put vigor into this industrial life which was just beginning. A nurseryman took my advice and came to settle in the place, and I preached wholesome doctrine to the poor concerning the planting of fruit trees, in order that some day they should obtain a monopoly of the sale of fruit in Grenoble.

"'You take your cheeses there as it is,' I used to tell them, 'why not take poultry, eggs, vegetables, game, hay and straw, and so forth?' All my counsels were a source of fortune; it was a question of who should follow them first. A number of little businesses were started; they went on at first but slowly, but from day to day their progress became more rapid; and now sixty carts full of the various products of the district set out every Monday for Grenoble, and there is more buckwheat grown for poultry food than they used to sow for human consumption. The trade in timber grew to be so considerable that it was subdivided, and since the fourth year of our industrial era, we have had dealers in firewood, squared timber, planks, bark, and later on, in charcoal. In the end four new sawmills were set up, to turn out the planks and beams of timber.

"When the ex-mayor had acquired a few business notions, he felt the necessity of learning to read and write. He compared the prices that were asked for wood in various neigh-

borhoods, and found such differences in his favor, that he secured new customers in one place after another, and now a third of the trade in the department passes through his hands. There has been such a sudden increase in our traffic that we find constant work for three wagon-builders and two harness-makers, each of them employing three hands at least. Lastly, the quantity of ironware that we use is so large that an agricultural implement- and tool-maker has removed into the town, and is very well satisfied with the result.

“The desire of gain develops a spirit of ambition, which has ever since impelled our workers to extend their field from the township to the canton, and from the canton to the department, so as to increase their profits by increasing their sales. I had only to say a word to point out new openings to them, and their own sense did the rest. Four years had been sufficient to change the face of the township. When I had come through it first, I did not catch the slightest sound; but in less than five years from that time, there was life and bustle everywhere. The gay songs, the shrill or murmuring sounds made by the tools in the workshops rang pleasantly in my ears. I watched the comings and goings of a busy population congregated in the clean and wholesome new town, where plenty of trees had been planted. Every one of them seemed conscious of a happy lot, every face shone with the content that comes through a life of useful toil.

“I look upon these five years as the first epoch of prosperity in the history of our town,” the doctor went on after a pause. “During that time I had prepared the ground and sowed the seed in men’s minds as well as in the land. Henceforward industrial progress could not be stayed, the population was bound to go forward. A second epoch was about to begin. This little world very soon desired to be better clad. A shoemaker came, and with him a haberdasher, a tailor, and a hatter. This dawn of luxury brought us a butcher and a grocer, and a midwife, who became very necessary to me, for I lost a great deal of time over maternity cases. The stubbed wastes yielded excellent harvests, and the superior quality of our agricultural produce was main-

tained through the increased supply of manure. My enterprise could now develop itself; everything followed on quite naturally.

“When the houses had been rendered wholesome, and their inmates gradually persuaded to feed and clothe themselves better, I wanted the dumb animals to feel the benefit of these beginnings of civilization. All the excellence of cattle, whether as a race or as individuals, and, in consequence, the quality of the milk and meat, depends upon the care that is expended upon them. I took the sanitation of cowsheds for the text of my sermons. I showed them how an animal that is properly housed and well cared for is more profitable than a lean, neglected beast, and the comparison wrought a gradual change for the better in the lot of the cattle in the commune. Not one of them was ill treated. The cows and oxen were rubbed down as in Switzerland and Auvergne. Sheepfolds, stables, byres, dairies, and barns were rebuilt after the pattern of the roomy, well-ventilated, and consequently healthy steadings that M. Gravier and I had constructed. Our tenants became my apostles. They made rapid converts of unbelievers, demonstrating the soundness of my doctrines by their prompt results. I lent money to those who needed it, giving the preference to hardworking poor people, because they served as an example. Any unsound or sickly cattle or beasts of poor quality were quickly disposed of by my advice, and replaced by fine specimens. In this way our dairy produce came, in time, to command higher prices in the market than that sent by other communes. We had splendid herds, and as a consequence, capital leather.

“This step forward was of great importance, and in this wise. In rural economy nothing can be regarded as trifling. Our hides used to fetch scarcely anything, and the leather we made was of little value, but when once our leather and hides were improved, tanneries were easily established along the waterside. We became tanners, and business rapidly increased.

“Wine, properly speaking, had been hitherto unknown; a thin, sour beverage like verjuice had been their only drink,

but now wineshops were established to supply a natural demand. The oldest tavern was enlarged and transformed into an inn, which furnished mules to pilgrims to the Grande Chartreuse who began to come our way, and after two years there was enough business for two innkeepers.

"The justice of the peace died just as our second prosperous epoch began, and luckily for us, his successor had formerly been a notary in Grenoble who had lost most of his fortune by a bad speculation, though enough of it yet remained to cause him to be looked upon in the village as a wealthy man. It was M. Gravier who induced him to settle among us. He built himself a comfortable house and helped me by uniting his efforts to mine. He also laid out a farm, and broke up and cleaned some of the waste land, and at this moment he has three chalets up above on the mountain side. He has a large family. He dismissed the old registrar and the clerk, and in their place installed better-educated men, who worked far harder, moreover, than their predecessors had done. One of the heads of these two new households started a distillery of potato-spirit, and the other was a wool-washer; each combined these occupations with his official work, and in this way two valuable industries were created among us.

"Now that the commune had some revenues of its own, no opposition was raised in any quarter when they were spent on building a townhall, with a free school for elementary education in the building and accommodation for a teacher. For this important post I had selected a poor priest who had taken the oath, and had therefore been cast out by the department, and who at last found a refuge among us for his old age. The schoolmistress is a very worthy woman who had lost all that she had, and was in great distress. We made up a nice little sum for her, and she has just opened a boarding-school for girls to which the wealthy farmers hereabouts are beginning to send their daughters.

"If so far, sir, I have been entitled to tell you the story of my own doings as the chronicle of this little spot of earth, I have reached the point when M. Janvier, the new parson,

began to divide the work of regeneration with me. He has been a second Fénelon, unknown beyond the narrow limits of a country parish, and by some secret of his own has infused a spirit of brotherliness and of charity among these folk that has made them almost like one large family. M. Dufau, the justice of the peace, was a later comer, but he in an equal degree deserves the gratitude of the people here.

"I will put the whole position before you in figures that will make it clearer than any words of mine. At this moment the commune owns two hundred acres of woodland, and a hundred and sixty acres of meadow. Without running up the rates, we give a hundred crowns to supplement the curé's stipend, we pay two hundred francs to the rural policeman, and as much again to the schoolmaster and schoolmistress. The maintenance of the roads costs us five hundred francs, while necessary repairs to the townhall, the parsonage, and the church, with some few other expenses, also amount to a similar sum. In fifteen years' time there will be a thousand francs' worth of wood to fell for every hundred francs' worth cut now, and the taxes will not cost the inhabitants a penny. This commune is bound to become one of the richest in France. But perhaps I am taxing your patience, sir?" said Benassis, suddenly discovering that his companion wore such a pensive expression that it seemed as though his attention was wandering.

"No! no!" answered the commandant.

"Our trade, handicrafts, and agriculture so far only supplied the needs of the district," the doctor went on. "At a certain point our prosperity came to a standstill. I wanted a post-office, and sellers of tobacco, stationery, powder and shot. The receiver of taxes had hitherto preferred to live elsewhere, but now I succeeded in persuading him to take up his abode in the town, holding out as inducements the pleasantness of the place and of the new society. As time and place permitted I had succeeded in producing a supply of everything for which I had first created a need, in attracting families of hardworking people into the district, and in implanting a desire to own land in them all.

So by degrees, as they saved a little money, the waste land began to be broken up; spade husbandry and small holdings increased; so did the value of property on the mountain.

“Those struggling folk who, when I knew them first, used to walk over to Grenoble carrying their few cheeses for sale, now made the journey comfortably in a cart, and took fruit, eggs, chicken, and turkeys, and before they were aware of it, everyone was a little richer. Even those who came off worst had a garden at any rate, and grew early vegetables and fruit. It became the children’s work to watch the cattle in the fields, and at last it was found to be a waste of time to bake bread at home. Here were signs of prosperity!

“But if this place was to be a permanent forge of industry, fuel must be constantly added to the fire. The town had not as yet a renascent industry which could maintain this commercial process, an industry which should make great transactions, a warehouse, and a market necessary. It is not enough that a country should lose none of the money that forms its capital; you will not increase its prosperity by more or less ingenious devices for causing this amount to circulate, by means of production and consumption, through the greatest possible number of hands. That is not where your problem lies. When a country is fully developed and its production keeps pace with its consumption, if private wealth is to increase as well as the wealth of the community at large, there must be exchanges with other communities, which will keep a balance on the right side of the balance-sheet. This thought has led states with a limited territorial basis like Tyre, Carthage, Venice, Holland, and England, for instance, to secure the carrying trade. I cast about for some such notion as this to apply to our little world, so as to inaugurate a third commercial epoch. Our town is so much like any other, that our prosperity was scarcely visible to a passing stranger; it was only for me that it was astonishing. The folk had come together by degrees; they themselves were a part of the change, and could not judge of its effects as a whole.

“Seven years had gone by when I met with two strangers,

the real benefactors of the place, which perhaps some day they will transform into a large town. One of them is a Tyrolese, an exceedingly clever fellow, who makes rough shoes for country people's wear, and boots for people of fashion in Grenoble as no one can make them, not even in Paris itself. He was a poor strolling musician, who, singing and working, had made his way through Italy; one of those busy Germans who fashion the tools for their own work, and make the instrument that they play upon. When he came to the town he asked if anyone wanted a pair of shoes. They sent him to me, and I gave him an order for two pairs of boots, for which he made his own lasts. The foreigner's skill surprised me. He gave accurate and consistent answers to the questions I put, and his face and manner confirmed the good opinion I had formed of him. I suggested that he should settle in the place, undertaking to assist him in business in every way that I could; in fact, I put a fairly large sum of money at his disposal. He accepted my offer. I had my own ideas in this. The quality of our leather had improved, and why should we not use it ourselves, and before very long make our own shoes at moderate prices?

"It was the basket-maker's business over again on a larger scale. Chance had put an exceedingly clever hard-working man in my way, and he must be retained so that a steady and profitable trade might be given to the place. There is a constant demand for foot-gear, and a very slight difference in price is felt at once by the purchaser.

"This was my reasoning, sir, and fortunately events have justified it. At this time we have five tanyards, each of which has its bark-mill. They take all the hides produced in the department itself, and even draw part of their supply from Provence; and yet the Tyrolese uses more leather than they can produce, and has forty work-people in his employ!

"I happened on the other man after a fashion no whit less strange, but you might find the story tedious. He is just an ordinary peasant, who discovered a cheaper way of making the great broad-brimmed hats that are worn in



this part of the world. He sells them in other cantons, and even sends them into Switzerland and Savoy. So long as the quality and the low prices can be maintained, here are two inexhaustible sources of wealth for the canton, which suggested to my mind the idea of establishing three fairs in the year. The prefect, amazed at our industrial progress, lent his aid in obtaining the royal ordinance which authorized them, and last year we held our three fairs. They are known as far as Savoy as the Shoe Fair and the Hat Fair.

“The head clerk of a notary in Grenoble heard of these changes. He was poor, but he is a well-educated, hard-working young fellow, and Mlle. Gravier was engaged to be married to him. He went to Paris to ask for an authorization to establish himself here as a notary, and his request was granted. As he had not had to pay for his appointment, he could afford to build a house in the market square of the new town, opposite the house of the justice of the peace. We have a market once a week, and a considerable amount of business is transacted in corn and cattle.

“Next year a druggist surely ought to come among us, and next we want a clockmaker, a furniture dealer, and a bookseller; and so, by degrees, we shall have all the desirable luxuries of life. Who knows but that at last we shall have a number of substantial houses, and give ourselves all the airs of a small city? Education has made such strides that there has never been any opposition made at the council-board when I proposed that we should restore our church and build a parsonage; nor when I brought forward a plan for laying out a fine open space, planted with trees, where the fairs could be held, and a further scheme for a survey of the township, so that its future streets should be wholesome, spacious, and wisely planned.

“This is how we came to have nineteen hundred hearths in the place of a hundred and thirty-seven; three thousand head of cattle instead of eight hundred; and for a population of seven hundred, no less than two thousand persons are living in the township, or three thousand, if the people down the valley are included. There are twelve houses

belonging to wealthy people in the commune, there are a hundred well-to-do families, and two hundred more which are thriving. The rest have their own exertions to look to. Everyone knows how to read and write, and we subscribe to seventeen different newspapers.

“We have poor people still among us—there are far too many of them, in fact; but we have no beggars, and there is work enough for all. I have so many patients that my daily round taxes the powers of two horses. I can go anywhere for five miles round at any hour without fear; for if anyone was minded to fire a shot at me, his life would not be worth ten minutes’ purchase. The undemonstrative affection of the people is my sole gain from all these changes, except the radiant ‘Good-day, M. Benassis,’ that everyone gives me as I pass. You will understand, of course, that the wealth incidentally acquired through my model farms has only been a means and not an end.”

“If everyone followed your example in other places, sir, France would be great indeed, and might laugh at the rest of Europe!” cried Genestas enthusiastically.

“But I have kept you out here for half an hour,” said Benassis; “it is growing dark, let us go in to dinner.”

The doctor’s house, on the side facing the garden, consists of a ground floor and a single story, with a row of five windows in each; dormer windows also project from the tiled mansard-roof. The green-painted shutters are in startling contrast with the gray tones of the walls. A vine wanders along the whole side of the house, a pleasant strip of green like a frieze, between the two stories. A few struggling Bengal roses make shift to live as best they may, half drowned at times by the drippings from the gutterless eaves.

As you enter the large vestibule, the salon lies to your right; it contains four windows, two of which look into the yard, and two into the garden. Ceiling and wainscot are paneled, and the walls are hung with seventeenth century tapestry—pathetic evidence that the room had been the object of the late owner’s aspiration, and that he had lavished all

that he could spare upon it. The great roomy armchairs, covered with brocaded damask; the old-fashioned, gilded candle-sconces above the chimney-piece, and the window curtains with their heavy tassels, showed that the curé had been a wealthy man. Benassis had made some additions to this furniture, which was not without a character of its own. He had placed two smaller tables, decorated with carved wooden garlands, between the windows on opposite sides of the room, and had put a clock, in a case of tortoise-shell, inlaid with copper, upon the mantle-shelf. The doctor seldom occupied the salon; its atmosphere was damp and close, like that of a room that is always kept shut. Memories of the dead curé still lingered about it; the peculiar scent of his tobacco seemed to pervade the corner by the hearth where he had been wont to sit. The two great easy-chairs were symmetrically arranged on either side of the fire, which had not been lighted since the time of M. Gravier's visit; the bright flames from the pine logs lighted the room.

"The evenings are chilly even now," said Benassis; "it is pleasant to see a fire."

Genestas was meditating. He was beginning to understand the doctor's indifference to his everyday surroundings.

"It is surprising to me, sir, that you, who possess real public spirit, should have made no effort to enlighten the Government, after accomplishing so much."

Benassis began to laugh, but without bitterness; he said, rather sadly—

"You mean that I should draw up some sort of memorial on various ways of civilizing France? You are not the first to suggest it, sir; M. Gravier has forestalled you. Unluckily, governments cannot be enlightened, and a government which regards itself as a diffuser of light is the least open to enlightenment. What we have done for our canton, every mayor ought, of course, to do for his; the magistrate should work for his town, the sub-prefect for his district, the prefect for the department, and the minister for France, each acting in his own sphere of interest. For the few miles of country road that I persuaded our people to make, another would succeed in constructing a canal or

a highway; and for my encouragement of the peasants' trade in hats, a minister would emancipate France from the industrial yoke of the foreigner by encouraging the manufacture of clocks in different places. by helping to bring to perfection our iron and steel, our tools and appliances, or by bringing silk or dyer's woad into cultivation.

"In commerce, 'encouragement' does not mean protection. A really wise policy should aim at making a country independent of foreign supply, but this should be effected without resorting to the pitiful shifts of customs duties and prohibitions. Industries must work out their own salvation, competition is the life of trade. A protected industry goes to sleep, and monopoly, like the protective tariff, kills it outright. The country upon which all others depend for their supplies will be the land which will promulgate free trade, for it will be conscious of its power to produce its manufactures at prices lower than those of any of its competitors. France is in a better position to attain this end than England, for France alone possesses an amount of territory sufficiently extensive to maintain a supply of agricultural produce at prices that will enable the worker to live on low wages; the Administration should keep this end in view, for therein lies the whole modern question. I have not devoted my life to this study, dear sir; I found my work by accident, and late in the day. Such simple things as these are too slight, moreover, to build into a system; there is nothing wonderful about them, they do not lend themselves to theories; it is their misfortune to be merely practically useful. And then work cannot be done quickly. The man who means to succeed in these ways must daily look to find within himself the stock of courage needed for the day, a courage in reality of the rarest kind, though it does not seem hard to practice, and meets with little recognition—the courage of the schoolmaster, who must say the same things over and over again. We all honor the man who has shed his blood on the battlefield, as you have done; but we ridicule this other whose life-fire is slowly consumed in repeating the same words to children of the same age. There is no attraction for any of us in obscure well-doing. We know nothing of the civic virtue

that led the great men of ancient times to serve their country in the lowest rank whenever they did not command. Our age is afflicted with a disease that makes each of us seek to rise above his fellows, and there are more saints than shrines among us.

“This is how it has come to pass. The monarchy fell, and we lost Honor, Christian Virtue faded with the religion of our forefathers, and our own ineffectual attempts at government have destroyed Patriotism. Ideas can never utterly perish, so these beliefs linger on in our midst, but they do not influence the great mass of the people, and Society has no support but Egoism. Every individual believes in himself. For us the future means egoism; further than that we cannot see. The great man who shall save us from the shipwreck which is imminent will no doubt avail himself of individualism when he makes a nation of us once more; but until this regeneration comes, we bide our time in a materialistic and utilitarian age. Utilitarianism—to this conclusion have we come. We are all rated, not at our just worth, but according to our social importance. People will scarcely look at an energetic man if he is in shirt-sleeves. The Government itself is pervaded by this idea. A minister sends a paltry medal to a sailor who has saved a dozen lives at the risk of his own, while the deputy who sells his vote to those in power receives the Cross of the Legion of Honor.

“Woe to a people made up of such men as these! For nations, like men, owe all the strength and vitality that is in them to noble thoughts and aspirations, and men’s feelings shape their faith. But when self-interest has taken the place of faith, and each one of us thinks only of himself, and believes in himself alone, how can you expect to find among us much of that civil courage whose very essence consists in self-renunciation? The same principle underlies both military and civil courage, although you soldiers are called upon to yield your lives up once and for all, while ours are given slowly drop by drop, and the battle is the same for both, although it takes different forms.

“The man who would fain civilize the lowliest spot on

earth needs something besides wealth for the task. Knowledge is still more necessary; and knowledge, and patriotism, and integrity are worthless unless they are accompanied by a firm determination on his part to set his own personal interests completely aside, and to devote himself to a social idea. France, no doubt, possesses more than one well-educated man and more than one patriot in every commune; but I am fully persuaded that not every canton can produce a man who to these valuable qualifications unites the unflagging will and pertinacity with which a blacksmith hammers out iron.

“The Destroyer and the Builder are two manifestations of Will: the one prepares the way, and the other accomplishes the work; the first appears in the guise of a spirit of evil, and the second seems like the spirit of good. Glory falls to the Destroyer, while the Builder is forgotten; for evil makes a noise in the world that rouses little souls to admiration, while good deeds are slow to make themselves heard. Self-love leads us to prefer the more conspicuous part. If it should happen that any public work is undertaken without an interested motive, it will only be by accident, until the day when education has changed our ways of regarding things in France.

“Yet suppose that this change had come to pass, and that all of us were public-spirited citizens; in spite of our comfortable lives among trivialities, should we not be in a fair way to become the most wearied, wearisome, and unfortunate race of philistines under the sun?

“I am not at the helm of State, the decision of great questions of this kind is not within my province; but, setting these considerations aside, there are other difficulties in the way of laying down hard and fast rules as to government. In the matter of civilization, everything is relative. Ideas that suit one country admirably are fatal in another—men’s minds are as various as the soils of the globe. If we have so often been ill-governed, it is because a faculty for government, like taste, is the outcome of a very rare and lofty attitude of mind. The qualifications for the work are found in a natural bent of the soul rather than in the possession

of scientific formulæ. No one need fear, however, to call himself a statesman, for his actions and motives cannot be justly estimated; his real judges are far away, and the results of his deeds are even more remote. We have a great respect here in France for men of ideas—a keen intellect exerts a great attraction for us; but ideas are of little value where a resolute will is the one thing needful. Administration, as a matter of fact, does not consist in forcing more or less wise methods and ideas upon the great mass of the nation, but in giving to the ideas, good or bad, that they already possess a practical turn which will make them conduce to the general welfare of the State. If old-established prejudices and customs bring a country into a bad way, the people will renounce their errors of their own accord. Are not losses the result of economical errors of every kind? And is it not, therefore, to everyone's interest to rectify them in the long run?

“ Luckily I found a *tabula rasa* in this district. They have followed my advice, and the land is well cultivated; but there had been no previous errors in agriculture, and the soil was good to begin with, so that it has been easy to introduce the five-ply shift, artificial grasses, and potatoes. My methods did not clash with people's prejudices. The faultily constructed plowshares in use in some parts of France were unknown here, the hoe sufficed for the little field work that they did. Our wheelwright extolled my wheeled plows because he wished to increase his own business, so I secured an ally in him; but in this matter, as in all others, I sought to make the good of one conduce to the good of all.

“ Then I turned my attention to another kind of production, that should increase the welfare rather than the wealth of these poor folk. I have brought nothing from without into this district; I have simply encouraged the people to seek beyond its limits for a market for their produce, a measure that could not but increase their prosperity in a way that they felt immediately. They had no idea of the fact, but they themselves were my apostles, and their works preached my doctrines. Something else must also be borne

in mind. We are barely five leagues from Grenoble. There is plenty of demand in a large city for produce of all kinds, but not every commune is situated at the gates of a city. In every similar undertaking the nature, situation, and resources of the country must be taken into consideration, and a careful study must be made of the soil, of the people themselves, and of many other things; and no one should expect to have vines grow in Normandy. So no tasks can be more various than those of government, and its general principles must be few in number. The law is uniform, but not so the land and the minds and customs or those who dwell in it; and the administration of the law is the art of carrying it out in such a manner that no injury is done to people's interests. Every place must be considered separately.

"On the other side of the mountain at the foot of which our deserted village lies, they find it impossible to use wheeled plows, because the soil is not deep enough. Now if the mayor of the commune were to take it into his head to follow in our footsteps, he would be the ruin of his neighborhood. I advised him to plant vineyards; they had a capital vintage last year in the little district, and their wine is exchanged for our corn.

"Then, lastly, it must be remembered that my words carried a certain weight with the people to whom I preached, and that we were continually brought into close contact. I cured my peasants' complaints; an easy task, for a nourishing diet is, as a rule, all that is needed to restore them to health and strength. Either through thrift, or through sheer poverty, the country people starve themselves; any illness among them is caused in this way, and as a rule they enjoy very fair health.

"When I first decided to devote myself to this life of obscure renunciation, I was in doubt for a long while whether to become a curé, a country doctor, or a justice of the peace. It is not without reason that people speak collectively of the priest, the lawyer, and the doctor as 'men of the black robe'—so the saying goes. The first heals the wounds of the soul, the second those of the purse, and the third those of the body. They represent the three principal ele-



ments necessary to the existence of society—conscience, property, and health. At one time the first, and at a later period the second, was all-important in the State. Our predecessors on this earth thought, perhaps not without reason, that the priest, who prescribed what men should think, ought to be paramount; so the priest was king, pontiff, and judge in one, for in those days belief and faith were everything. All this has been changed in our day; and we must even take our epoch as we find it. But I, for one, believe that the progress of civilization and the welfare of the people depend on these three men. They are the three powers who bring home to the people's minds the ways in which facts, interests, and principles affect them. They themselves are three great results produced in the midst of the nation by the operation of events, by the ownership of property, and by the growth of ideas. Time goes on and brings changes to pass, property increases or diminishes in men's hands, all the various readjustments have to be duly regulated, and in this way principles of social order are established. If civilization is to spread itself, and production is to be increased, the people must be made to understand the way in which the interests of the individual harmonize with national interests which resolve themselves into facts, interests, and principles. As these three professions are bound to deal with these issues of human life, it seemed to me that they must be the most powerful civilizing agencies of our time. They alone afford to a man of wealth the opportunity of mitigating the fate of the poor, with whom they daily bring him in contact.

“The peasant is always more willing to listen to the man who lays down rules for saving him from bodily ills than to the priest who exhorts him to save his soul. The first speaker can talk of this earth, the scene of the peasant's labors, while the priest is bound to talk to him of heaven, with which, unfortunately, the peasant nowadays concerns himself very little indeed; I say unfortunately, because the doctrine of a future life is not only a consolation, but a means by which men may be governed. Is not religion the one power that sanctions social laws? We have but lately

vindicated the existence of God. In the absence of a religion, the Government was driven to invent the Terror, in order to carry its laws into effect; but the terror was the fear of man, and it has passed away.

“When a peasant is ill, when he is forced to lie on his pallet, and while he is recovering, he cannot help himself, he is forced to listen to logical reasoning, which he can understand quite well if it is put clearly before him. This thought made a doctor of me. My calculations for the peasants were made along with them. I never gave advice unless I was quite sure of the results, and in this way compelled them to admit the wisdom of my views. The people require infallibility. Infallibility was the making of Napoleon; he would have been a god if he had not filled the world with the sound of his fall at Waterloo. If Mahomet founded a permanent religion after conquering the third part of the globe, it was by dint of concealing his deathbed from the crowd. The same rules hold good for the great conqueror and for the provincial mayor, and a nation or a commune is much the same sort of crowd; indeed, the great multitude of mankind is the same everywhere.

“I have been exceedingly firm with those whom I have helped with money; if I had not been inflexible on this point, they all would have laughed at me. Peasants, no less than worldlings, end by despising the man that they can deceive. He has been cheated? Clearly, then, he must have been weak; and it is might alone that governs the world. I have never charged a penny for my professional advice, except to those who were evidently rich people; but I have not allowed the value of my services to be overlooked at all, and I always make them pay for medicine unless the patient is exceedingly poor. If my peasants do not pay me in money, they are quite aware that they are in my debt; sometimes they satisfy their consciences by bringing oats for my horses, or corn, when it is cheap. But if the miller were to send me some eels as a return for my advice, I should tell him that he is too generous for such a small matter. My politeness bears fruit. In the winter I shall have some sacks of flour for the poor. Ah! sir, they have kind hearts,

these people, if one does not slight them, and to-day I think more good and less evil of them than I did formerly."

"What a deal of trouble you have taken!" said Genestas.

"Not at all," answered Benassis. "It was no more trouble to say something useful than to chatter about trifles; and whether I chatted or joked, the talk always turned on them and their concerns wherever I went. They would not listen to me at first. I had to overcome their dislikes; I belonged to the middle classes—that is to say, I was a natural enemy. I found the struggle amusing. An easy or an uneasy conscience—that is all the difference that lies between doing well or ill; the trouble is the same in either case. If scoundrels would but behave themselves properly, they might be millionaires instead of being hanged. That is all."

"The dinner is growing cold, sir!" cried Jacquotte, in the doorway.

Genestas caught the doctor's arm.

"I have only one comment to offer on what I have just heard," he remarked. "I am not acquainted with any account of the wars of Mahomet, so that I can form no opinions as to his military talents; but if you had only watched the Emperor's tactics during the campaign in France, you might well have taken him for a god; and if he was beaten on the field of Waterloo, it was because he was more than mortal, it was because the earth found his weight too heavy to bear, and sprang from under his feet! On every other subject I entirely agree with you, and *tonnerre de Dieu!* whoever hatched you did a good day's work."

"Come," exclaimed Benassis with a smile, "let us sit down to dinner."

The walls of the dining-room were paneled from floor to ceiling, and painted gray. The furniture consisted of a few straw-bottomed chairs, a sideboard, some cupboards, a stove, and the late owner's celebrated clock; there were white curtains in the window, and a white cloth on the table, about which there was no sign of luxury. The dinner service was of plain white earthenware; the soup, made after the traditions of the late curé, was the most concentrated kind of

broth that was ever set to simmer by any mortal cook. The doctor and his guest had scarcely finished it when a man rushed into the kitchen, and in spite of Jacquotte, suddenly invaded the dining-room.

"Well, what is it?" asked the doctor.

"It is this, sir. The mistress, our Mme. Vigneau, has turned as white as can be, so that we are frightened about her."

"Oh, well, then," Benassis said cheerfully, "I must leave the table," and he rose to go.

In spite of the doctor's entreaties, Genestas flung down his table-napkin, and swore in soldierly fashion that he would not finish his dinner without his host. He returned indeed to the salon; and as he warmed himself by the fire, he thought over the troubles that no man may escape, the troubles that are found in every lot that it falls to man to endure here upon earth.

Benassis soon came back, and the two future friends sat down again.

"Taboureau has just come up to speak to you," said Jacquotte to her master, as she brought in the dishes that she had kept hot for them.

"Who can be ill at his place?" asked the doctor.

"No one is ill, sir. I think from what he said that it is some matter of his own that he wants to ask you about; he is coming back again."

"Very good. This Taboureau," Benassis went on, addressing Genestas, "is for me a whole philosophical treatise; take a good look at him when he comes, he is sure to amuse you. He was a laborer, a thrifty, hard-working man, eating little and getting through a great deal of work. As soon as the rogue came to have a few crowns of his own, his intelligence began to develop; he watched the progress which I had originated in this little district with an eye to his own profit. He has made quite a fortune in eight years' time, that is to say, a fortune for our part of the world. Very likely he may have a couple of score thousand francs by now. But if I were to give you a thousand guesses, you would never find out how he made the money. He is a

usurer, and his scheme of usury is so profoundly and so cleverly based upon the requirements of the whole canton, that I should merely waste my time if I were to take it upon myself to undeceive them as to the benefits which they reap, in their own opinion, from their dealings with Taboureau. When this devil of a fellow saw everyone cultivating his own plot of ground, he hurried about buying grain so as to supply the poor with the requisite seed. Here, as everywhere else, the peasants and even some of the farmers had no ready money with which to pay for seed. To some, Master Taboureau would lend a sack of barley, for which he was to receive a sack of rye at harvest time, and to others a measure of wheat for a sack of flour. At the present day the man has extended this curious business of his all over the department; and unless something happens to prevent him, he will go on and very likely make a million. Well, my dear sir, Taboureau the laborer, an obliging, hard-working, good-natured fellow, used to lend a helping hand to anyone who asked him; but as his gains have increased *Monsieur* Taboureau has become litigious, arrogant, and somewhat given to sharp practice. The more money he makes, the worse he grows. The moment that the peasant forsakes his life of toil pure and simple for the leisured existence of the landowning classes, he becomes intolerable. There is a certain kind of character, partly virtuous, partly vicious, half-educated, half-ignorant, which will always be the despair of governments. You will see an example of it in Taboureau. He looks simple, and even doltish; but when his interests are in question, he is certainly profoundly clever."

A heavy footstep announced the approach of the grain-lender.

"Come in, Taboureau!" cried Benassis.

Thus forewarned by the doctor, the commandant scrutinized the peasant in the doorway. Taboureau was decidedly thin, and stooped a little. He had a bulging forehead, covered with wrinkles, and a cavernous face, in which two small gray eyes with a dark spot in either of them seemed to be pierced rather than set. The lines of the miser's mouth were close and firm, and his narrow chin turned up

to meet an exaggeratedly hooked nose. His hair was turning gray already, and deep furrows which converged above the prominent cheekbones spoke of the wily shrewdness of a horse-dealer and of a life spent in journeying about. He wore a blue coat in fairly clean condition, the square side-pocket flaps stuck out above his hips, and the skirts of the coat hung loose in front, so that a white-flowered waistcoat was visible. There he stood firmly planted on both feet, leaning upon a thick stick with a knob at the end of it. A little spaniel had followed the grain-dealer, in spite of Jacquotte's efforts, and was crouching beside him.

"Well, what is it?" Benassis asked as he turned to this being.

Taboureau gave a suspicious glance at the stranger seated at the doctor's table, and said—

"It is not a case of illness, M. le Maire, but you understand how to doctor the ailments of the purse just as well as those of the body. We have had a little difficulty with a man over at Saint Laurent, and I have come to ask your advice about it."

"Why not see the justice of the peace or his clerk?"

"Oh, because you are so much cleverer, sir, and I shall feel more sure about my case if I can have your countenance."

"My good Taboureau, I am willing to give medical advice to the poor without charging for it; but I cannot look into the lawsuits of a man who is as wealthy as you are for nothing. It costs a good deal to acquire that kind of knowledge."

Taboureau began to twist his hat about.

"If you want my advice, in order to save the hard coin you would have to pay to the lawyer folk over in Grenoble, you must send a bag of rye to the widow Martin, the woman who is bringing up the charity children."

"*Dame!* I will do it with all my heart, sir, if you think it necessary. Can I talk about this business of mine without troubling the gentleman there?" he added, with a look at Genestas.

The doctor nodded, so Taboureau went on.

"Well, then, sir, two months ago a man from Saint

Laurent came over here to find me. 'Taboureau,' said he to me, 'could you sell me a hundred and thirty-seven measures of barley?' 'Why not?' say I, 'that is my trade. Do you want it immediately?' 'No,' he says, 'I want it for the beginning of spring, in March.' So far, so good. Well, we drive our bargain, and we drink a glass, and we agree that he is to pay me the price that barley fetched at Grenoble last market day, and I am to deliver it in March. I am to warehouse it at owner's risk, and no allowance for shrinkage of course. But barley goes up and up, my dear sir; the barley rises like boiling milk. Then I am hard up for money, and I sell my barley. Quite natural, sir, was it not?"

"No," said Benassis, "the barley had passed out of your possession, you were only warehousing it. And suppose the barley had gone down in value, would you not have compelled your buyer to take it at the price you agreed upon?"

"But very likely he would not have paid me, sir. One must look out for one's self! The seller ought to make a profit when the chance comes in his way; and, after all, the goods are not yours until you have paid for them. That is so, M. l'Officier, is it not? For you can see that the gentleman has been in the army."

"Taboureau," Benassis said sternly, "ill luck will come to you. Sooner or later God punishes ill deeds. How can you, knowing as much as you do, a capable man moreover, and a man who conducts his business honorably, set examples of dishonesty to the canton? If you allow such proceedings as this to be taken against you, how can you expect that the poor will remain honest people and will not rob you? Your laborers will cheat you out of part of their working hours, and everyone here will be demoralized. You are in the wrong. Your barley was as good as delivered. If the man from Saint Laurent had fetched it himself, you would not have gone there to take it away from him; you have sold something that was no longer yours to sell, for your barley had already been turned into money which was to be paid down at the stipulated time. But go on."

Genestas gave the doctor a significant glance, to call his attention to Taboureau's impassive countenance. Not a

muscle had stirred in the usurer's face during this reprimand; there was no flush on his forehead, and no sign of emotion in his little eyes.

"Well, sir, I am called upon to supply the barley at last winter's price. Now I consider that I am not bound to do so."

"Look here, Taboureau, deliver that barley and be quick about it, or make up your mind to be respected by nobody in future. Even if you gained the day in a case like this, you would be looked upon as an unscrupulous man who does not keep to his word, and is not bound by promises, or by honor, or——"

"Go on, there is nothing to be afraid of; tell me that I am a scamp, a scoundrel, a thief outright. You can say things like that in business without insulting anybody, M. le Maire. 'Tis each for himself in business, you know."

"Well, then, why deliberately put yourself in a position in which you deserve to be called by such names?"

"But if the law is on my side, sir?"

"But the law will certainly *not* be on your side."

"Are you quite sure about it, sir? Certain sure? For you see it is an important matter."

"Certainly I am. Quite sure. If I were not at dinner, I would have down the code, and you should see for yourself. If the case comes on, you will lose it, and you will never set foot in my house again, for I do not wish to receive people whom I do not respect. Do you understand? You will lose your case."

"Oh! no, not at all, I shall not lose it, sir," said Taboureau. "You see, sir, it is this way; it is the man from Saint Laurent who owes *me* the barley; I bought it of him, and now he refuses to deliver it. I just wanted to make quite certain that I should gain my case before going to any expense at the court about it."

Genestas and the doctor exchanged glances; each concealed his amazement at the ingenious device by which the man had sought to learn the truth about this point of law.

"Very well, Taboureau, your man is a swindler; you should not make bargains with such people."



"Ah! sir, they understand business, those people do."

"Good-by, Taboureau."

"Your servant, gentlemen."

"Well, now," remarked Benassis, when the usurer had gone, "if that fellow were in Paris, do you not think that he would be a millionaire before very long?"

After dinner, the doctor and his visitor went back to the salon, and all the rest of the evening until bedtime they talked about war and politics; Genestas evincing a most violent dislike of the English in the course of conversation.

"May I know whom I have the honor of entertaining as a guest?" asked the doctor.

"My name is Pierre Bluteau," answered Genestas; "I am a captain stationed at Grenoble."

"Very well, sir. Do you care to adopt M. Gravier's plan? In the morning after breakfast he liked to go on my rounds with me. I am not at all sure that you will find anything to interest you in the things that occupy me—they are so very commonplace. For, after all, you own no land about here, nor are you the mayor of the place, and you will see nothing in the canton that you cannot see elsewhere; one thatched cottage is just like another. Still you will be in the open air, and you will have something to take you out of doors."

"No proposal could give me more pleasure. I did not venture to make it myself, lest I should thrust myself upon you."

Commandant Genestas (who shall keep his own name in spite of the fictitious appellation which he had thought fit to give himself) followed his host to a room on the first floor above the salon.

"That is right," said Benassis, "Jacquotte has lighted a fire for you. If you want anything, there is a bell-pull, close to the head of the bed."

"I am not likely to want anything, however small, it seems to me," exclaimed Genestas. "There is even a boot-jack. Only an old trooper knows what a boot-jack is worth! There are times, when one is out on a campaign, sir, when one is ready to burn down a house to come by a knave of a

boot-jack. After a few marches, one on the top of another, or above all, after an engagement, there are times when a swollen foot and the soaked leather will not part company, pull as you will; I have had to lie down in my boots more than once. One can put up with the annoyance so long as one is by one's self."

The commandant's wink gave a kind of profound slyness to his last utterance; then he began to make a survey. Not without surprise, he saw that the room was neatly kept, comfortable, and almost luxurious.

"What splendor!" was his comment. "Your own room must be something wonderful."

"Come and see," said the doctor; "I am your neighbor, there is nothing but the staircase between us."

Genestas was again surprised when he entered the doctor's room, a bare-looking apartment with no adornment on the walls save an old-fashioned wallpaper of a yellowish tint with a pattern of brown roses over it; the color had gone in patches here and there. There was a roughly painted iron bedstead, two gray cotton curtains were suspended from a wooden bracket above it, and a threadbare strip of carpet lay at the foot; it was like a bed in a hospital. By the bed-head stood a rickety cupboard on four feet with a door that continually rattled with a sound like castanets. Three chairs and a couple of straw-bottomed armchairs stood about the room, and on a low chest of drawers in walnut wood stood a basin, and a ewer of obsolete pattern with a lid, which was kept in place by a leaden rim round the top of the vessel. This completed the list of the furniture.

The grate was empty. All the apparatus required for shaving lay about in front of an old mirror suspended above the painted stone chimney-piece by a bit of string. The floor was clean and carefully swept, but it was worn and splintered in various places, and there were hollows in it here and there. Gray cotton curtains bordered with a green fringe adorned the two windows. The scrupulous cleanliness maintained by Jacquotte gave a certain air of distinction to this picture of simplicity, but everything in it, down to the round table littered with stray papers, and the very

pens on the writing-desk, gave the idea of an almost monastic life—a life so wholly filled with thought and feeling of a wider kind that outward surroundings had come to be matters of no moment. An open door allowed the commandant to see a smaller room, which doubtless the doctor seldom occupied. It was scarcely kept in the same condition as the adjoining apartment; a few dusty books lay strewn about over the no less dusty shelves, and from the rows of labeled bottles it was easy to guess that the place was devoted rather to the dispensing of drugs than to scientific studies.

“Why this difference between your room and mine, you will ask?” said Benassis. “Listen a moment. I have always blushed for those who put their guests in the attics, who furnish them with mirrors that distort everything to such a degree that anyone beholding himself might think that he was smaller or larger than nature made him, or suffering from an apoplectic stroke or some other bad complaint. Ought we not to do our utmost to make a room as pleasant as possible during the time that our friend can be with us? Hospitality, to my thinking, is a virtue, a pleasure, and a luxury; but in whatever light it is considered, nay, even if you regard it as a speculation, ought not our guest or our friend to be made much of? Ought not every refinement of luxury to be reserved for him?”

“So the best furniture is put into your room, where a thick carpet is laid down; there are hangings on the walls, and a clock and wax candles; and for you Jacquotte will do her best, she has no doubt brought a night-light, and a pair of new slippers and some milk, and her warming-pan too for your benefit. I hope that you will find that luxurious armchair the most comfortable seat you have ever sat in, it was a discovery of the late curé’s; I do not know where he found it, but it is a fact that if you wish to meet with the perfection of comfort, beauty, or convenience, you must ask counsel of the Church. Well, I hope that you will find everything in your room to your liking. You will find some good razors and excellent soap, and all the trifling details that make one’s own home so pleasant. And if my views

on the subject of hospitality should not at once explain the difference between your room and mine, to-morrow, M. Bluteau, you will arrive at a wonderfully clear comprehension of the bareness of my room and the untidy condition of my study, when you see all the continual comings and goings here. Mine is not an indoor life, to begin with. I am almost always out of the house, and if I stay at home, peasants come in at every moment to speak to me. My body and soul and house are all theirs. Why should I worry about social conventions in these matters, or trouble myself over the damage unintentionally done to floors and furniture by these worthy folk? Such things cannot be helped. Luxury properly belongs to the boudoir and the guest-chamber, to great houses and châteaux. In short, as I scarcely do more than sleep here, what do I want with the superfluities of wealth? You do not know, moreover, how little I care for anything in this world."

They wished each other a friendly good-night with a warm shake of the hand, and went to bed. But before the commandant slept, he came to more than one conclusion as to the man who hour by hour grew greater in his eyes.

## II

### A DOCTOR'S ROUND

THE first thing next morning Genestas went to the stable, drawn thither by the affection that every man feels for the horse that he rides. Nicolle's method of rubbing down the animal was quite satisfactory.

"Up already, Commandant Bluteau?" cried Benassis, as he came upon his guest. "You hear the drum beat in the morning wherever you go, even in the country! You are a regular soldier!"

"Are you all right?" replied Genestas, holding out his hand with a friendly gesture.

"I am never really all right," answered Benassis, half merrily, half sadly.

"Did you sleep well, sir?" inquired Jacquotte.

"Faith, yes, my beauty; the bed as you made it was fit for a queen."

Jacquotte's face beamed as she followed her master and his guest, and when she had seen them seat themselves at table, she remarked to Nicolle—

"He is not a bad sort, after all, that officer gentleman."

"I am sure he is not, he has given me two francs already."

"We will begin to-day by calling at two places where there have been deaths," Benassis said to his visitor as they left the dining-room. "Although doctors seldom deign to confront their supposed victims, I will take you round to the two houses, where you will be able to make some interesting observations of human nature; and the scenes to which you will be a witness will show you that in the expression of their feelings our folk among the hills differ greatly from the dwellers in the lowlands. Up among the mountain peaks in our canton they cling to customs that bear the impress of an older time, and that vaguely recall scenes in the Bible. Nature has traced out a line over our mountain ranges; the whole appearance of the country is different on either side of it. You find strength of character up above, flexibility and quickness of perception below; they have larger ways of regarding things among the hills, while the bent of the lowlands is always towards the material interests of existence. I have never seen a difference so strongly marked, unless it has been in the Val d'Ajou, where the northern side is peopled by a tribe of idiots, and the southern by an intelligent race. There is nothing but a stream in the valley bottom to separate these two populations, which are utterly dissimilar in every respect, as different in face and stature as in manners, customs, and occupation. A fact of this kind should compel those who govern a country to make very extensive studies of local differences before passing laws that are to affect the great mass of the people. But the horses are ready, let us start!"

In a short time the two horsemen reached a house in a part of the township that was overlooked by the mountains

of the Grande Chartreuse. Before the door of the dwelling, which was fairly clean and tidy, they saw a coffin, set upon two chairs, and covered with a black pall. Four tall candles stood about it, and on a stool near by there was a shallow brass dish full of holy water, in which a branch of green boxwood was steeping. Every passer-by went into the yard, knelt by the side of the dead, said a Pater Noster, and sprinkled a few drops of holy water on the bier. Above the black cloth that covered the coffin rose the green sprays of a jessamine that grew beside the doorway, and a twisted vine-shoot, already in leaf, overran the lintel. Even the saddest ceremonies demand that things shall appear to the best advantage, and in obedience to this vaguely-felt requirement a young girl had been sweeping the front of the house. The dead man's eldest son, a young peasant about twenty-two years of age, stood motionless, leaning against the door-post. The tears in his eyes came and went without falling, or perhaps he furtively brushed them away. Benassis and Genestas saw all the details of this scene as they stood beyond the low wall; they fastened their horses to one of the row of poplar trees that grew along it, and entered the yard just as the widow came out of the byre. A woman carrying a jug of milk was with her, and spoke.

"Try to bear up bravely, my poor Pelletier," she said.

"Ah! my dear, after twenty-five years of life together, it is very hard to lose your man," and her eyes brimmed over with tears. "Will you pay the two sous?" she added, after a moment, as she held out her hand to her neighbor.

"There, now! I had forgotten about it," said the other woman, giving her the coin. "Come, neighbor, don't take on so. Ah! there is M. Benassis!"

"Well, poor mother, how are you going on? A little better?" asked the doctor.

"*Dame!*" she said, as the tears fell fast, "we must go on, all the same, that is certain. I tell myself that my man is out of pain now. He suffered so terribly! But come inside, sir. Jacques, set some chairs for these gentlemen. Come, stir yourself a bit. Lord bless you! if you were to stop there for a century, it would not bring your poor

father back again. And now, you will have to do the work of two."

"No, no, good woman, leave your son alone, we will not sit down. You have a boy there who will take care of you, and who is quite fit to take his father's place."

"Go and change your clothes, Jacques," cried the widow; "you will be wanted directly."

"Well, good-by, mother," said Benassis.

"Your servant, gentlemen."

"Here, you see, death is looked upon as an event for which everyone is prepared," said the doctor; "it brings no interruption to the course of family life, and they will not even wear mourning of any kind. No one cares to be at the expense of it; they are all either too poor or too parsimonious in the village hercabouts, so that mourning is unknown in country districts. Yet the custom of wearing mourning is something better than a law or a usage, it is an institution somewhat akin to all moral obligations. But in spite of our endeavors, neither M. Janvier nor I have succeeded in making our peasants understand the great importance of public demonstrations of feeling for the maintenance of social order. These good folk who have only just begun to think and act for themselves, are slow as yet to grasp the changed conditions which should attach them to these theories. They have only reached those ideas which conduce to economy and to physical welfare; in the future, if someone else carries on this work of mine, they will come to understand the principles that serve to uphold and preserve public order and justice. As a matter of fact, it is not sufficient to be an honest man, you must appear to be honest in the eyes of others. Society does not live by moral ideas alone; its existence depends upon actions in harmony with those ideas.

"In most country communes, out of a hundred families deprived by death of their head, there are only a few individuals capable of feeling more keenly than the others, who will remember the death for very long; in a year's time the rest will have forgotten all about it. Is not this forgetfulness a sore evil? A religion is the very heart of a nation;

it expresses their feelings and their thoughts, and exalts them by giving them an object; but unless outward and visible honor is paid to a God, religion cannot exist; and, as a consequence, human ordinances lose all their force. If the conscience belongs to God and to Him only, the body is amenable to social law. Is it not, therefore, a first step towards atheism to efface every sign of pious sorrow in this way, to neglect to impress on children who are not yet old enough to reflect, and on all other people who stand in need of example, the necessity of obedience to human law, by openly manifested resignation to the will of Providence, who chastens and consoles, who bestows and takes away worldly wealth? I confess that, after passing through a period of sneering incredulity, I have come during my life here to recognize the value of the rites of religion and of religious observances in the family, and to discern the importance of household customs and domestic festivals. The family will always be the basis of human society. Law and authority are first felt there; there, at any rate, the habit of obedience should be learned. Viewed in the light of all their consequences, the spirit of the family and paternal authority are two elements but little developed as yet in our new legislative system. Yet in the family, the commune, the department, lies the whole of our country. The laws ought therefore to be based on these three great divisions.

“In my opinion, marriages, the birth of infants, and the deaths of heads of households, cannot be surrounded with too much circumstance. The secret of the strength of Catholicism, and of the deep root that it has taken in the ordinary life of man, lies precisely in this—that it steps in to invest every important event in his existence with a pomp that is so naïvely touching, and so grand, whenever the priest rises to the height of his mission and brings his office into harmony with the sublimity of Christian doctrine.

“Once I looked upon the Catholic religion as a cleverly exploited mass of prejudices and superstitions, which an intelligent civilization ought to deal with according to its deserts. Here I have discovered its political necessity and its usefulness as a moral agent; here, moreover, I have come



to understand its power, through a knowledge of the actual thing which the word expresses. Religion means a bond or tie, and certainly a cult—or, in other words, the outward and visible form of religion is the only force that can bind the various elements of society together and mold them into a permanent form. Lastly, it was also here that I have felt the soothing influence that religion sheds over the wounds of humanity, and (without going further into the subject) I have seen how admirably it is suited to the fervid temperaments of Southern races.

“Let us take the road up the hillside,” said the doctor, interrupting himself; “we must reach the plateau up there. Thence we shall look down upon both valleys, and you will see a magnificent view. The plateau lies three thousand feet above the level of the Mediterranean; we shall see over Savoy and Dauphiné, and the mountain ranges of the Lyonnais and Rhone. We shall be in another commune, a hill commune, and on a farm belonging to M. Gravier you will see the kind of scene of which I have spoken. There the great events of life are invested with a solemnity which comes up to my ideas. Mourning for the dead is rigorously prescribed. Poor people will beg in order to purchase black clothing, and no one refuses to give in such a case. There are few days in which the widow does not mention her loss; she always speaks of it with tears, and her grief is as deep after ten days of sorrow as on the morning after her bereavement. Manners are patriarchal: the father’s authority is unlimited, his word is law. He takes his meals sitting by himself at the head of the table; his wife and children wait upon him, and those about him never address him without using certain respectful forms of speech, while everyone remains standing and uncovered in his presence. Men brought up in this atmosphere are conscious of their dignity; to my way of thinking, it is a noble education to be brought up among these customs. And, for the most part, they are upright, thrifty, and hard-working people in this commune. The father of every family, when he is old and past work, divides his property equally among his children, and they support him; that is the usual way here.

An old man of ninety, in the last century, who had divided everything he had among his four children, went to live with each one in turn for three months in the year. As he left the oldest to go to the home of a younger brother, one of his friends asked him, 'Well, are you satisfied with the arrangement?' 'Faith! yes,' the old man answered; 'they have treated me as if I had been their own child.' That answer of his seemed so remarkable to an officer then stationed at Grenoble, that he repeated it in more than one Parisian salon. That officer was the celebrated moralist Vauvenargues, and in this way the beautiful saying came to the knowledge of another writer named Chamfort. Ah! still more forcible phrases are often struck out among us, but they lack a historian worthy of them."

"I have come across Moravians and Lollards in Bohemia and Hungary," said Genestas. "They are a kind of people something like your mountaineers, good folk who endure the sufferings of war with angelic patience."

"Men living under simple and natural conditions are bound to be almost alike in all countries. Sincerity of life takes but one form. It is true that a country life often extinguishes thought of a wider kind; but evil propensities are weakened and good qualities are developed by it. In fact, the fewer the numbers of the human beings collected together in a place, the less crime, evil thinking, and general bad behavior will be found in it. A pure atmosphere counts for a good deal in purity of morals."

The two horsemen, who had been climbing the stony road at a foot pace, now reached the level space of which Benassis had spoken. It is a strip of land lying round about the base of a lofty mountain peak, a bare surface of rock with no growth of any kind upon it; deep clefts are riven in its sheer inaccessible sides. The gray crest of the summit towers above the ledge of fertile soil which lies around it, a domain sometimes narrower, sometimes wider, and altogether about a hundred acres in extent. Here, through a vast break in the line of the hills to the south, the eye sees French Maurienne, Dauphiné, the crags of Savoy, and the far-off mountains of the Lyonnais. Genestas was gazing

from this point, over a land that lay far and wide in the spring sunlight, when there arose the sound of a wailing cry.

"Let us go on," said Benassis; "the wail for the dead has begun, that is the name they give to this part of the funeral rites."

On the western slope of the mountain peak, the commandant saw the buildings belonging to a farm of some size. The whole place formed a perfect square. The gateway consisted of a granite arch, impressive in its solidity, which added to the old-world appearance of the buildings with the ancient trees that stood about them, and the growth of plant life on the roofs. The house itself lay at the farther end of the yard. Barns, sheepfolds, stables, cowsheds, and other buildings lay on either side, and in the midst was the great pool where the manure had been laid to rot. On a thriving farm, such a yard as this is usually full of life and movement, but to-day it was silent and deserted. The poultry were shut up, the cattle were all in the byres, there was scarcely a sound of animal life. Both stables and cowsheds had been carefully locked, and a clean path to the house had been swept across the yard. The perfect neatness which reigned in a place where everything as a rule was in disorder, the absence of stirring life, the stillness in so noisy a spot, the calm serenity of the hills, the deep shadow cast by the towering peak—everything combined to make a strong impression on the mind.

Genestas was accustomed to painful scenes, yet he could not help shuddering as he saw a dozen men and women standing weeping outside the door of the great hall. "*The master is dead!*" they wailed; the unison of voices gave appalling effect to the words which they repeated twice during the time required to cross the space between the gateway and the farmhouse door. To this wailing lament succeeded moans from within the house; the sound of a woman's voice came through the casements.

"I dare not intrude upon such grief as this," said Genestas to Benassis.

"I always go to visit a bereaved family," the doctor answered, "either to certify the death, or to see that no mis-

chance caused by grief has befallen the living. You need not hesitate to come with me. The scene is impressive, and there will be such a great many people that no one will notice your presence."

As Genesias followed the doctor, he found, in fact, that the first room was full of relations of the dead. They passed through the crowd and stationed themselves at the door of a bedroom that opened out of the great hall which served the whole family for a kitchen and a sitting-room; the whole colony, it should rather be called, for the great length of the table showed that some forty people lived in the house. Benassis's arrival interrupted the discourse of a tall, simply dressed woman, with thin locks of hair, who held the dead man's hand in hers in a way that spoke eloquently.

The dead master of the house had been arrayed in his best clothes, and now lay stretched out cold and stiff upon the bed. They had drawn the curtains aside; the thought of heaven seemed to brood over the quiet face and the white hair—it was like the closing scene of a drama. On either side of the bed stood the children and the nearest relations of the husband and wife. These last stood in a line on either side; the wife's kin upon the left, and those of her husband on the right. Both men and women were kneeling in prayer, and almost all of them were in tears. Tall candles stood about the bed. The curé of the parish and his assistants had taken their places in the middle of the room, beside the bier. There was something tragical about the scene, with the head of the family lying before the coffin, which was waiting to be closed down upon him forever.

"Ah!" cried the widow, turning as she saw Benassis, "if the skill of the best of men could not save you, my dear lord, it was because it was ordained in heaven that you should precede me to the tomb! Yes, this hand of yours, that used to press mine so kindly, is cold! I have lost my dear helpmate forever, and our household has lost its beloved head, for truly you were the guide of us all! Alas! there is not one of those who are weeping with me who has not known all the worth of your nature, and felt the light of your soul, but I alone knew all the patience and the kindness

of your heart. Oh! my husband, my husband! must I bid you farewell forever? Farewell to you, our stay and support! Farewell to you, my dear master! And we, your children, for to each of us you gave the same fatherly love, all we, your children, have lost our father!"

The widow flung herself upon the dead body and clasped it in a tight embrace, as if her kisses and the tears with which she covered it could give it warmth again; during the pause, came the wail of the servants—

"*The master is dead!*"

"Yes," the widow went on, "he is dead! Our beloved who gave us our bread, who sowed and reaped for us, who watched over our happiness, who guided us through life, who ruled so kindly among us. *Now* I may speak in his praise, and say that he never caused me the slightest sorrow; he was good and strong and patient. Even while we were torturing him for the sake of his health, so precious to us, 'Let it be, children, it is all no use,' the dear lamb said, just in the same tone of voice with which he had said, 'Everything is all right, friends,' only a few days before. Ah! *grand Dieu!* a few days ago! A few days have been enough to take away the gladness from our house and to darken our lives, to close the eyes of the best, most upright, most revered of men. No one could plow as he could. Night or day he would go about over the mountains, he feared nothing, and when he came back he had always a smile for his wife and children. Ah! he was our best beloved! It was dull here by the fireside when *he* was away, and our food lost all its relish. Oh! how will it be now, when our guardian angel will be laid away under the earth, and we shall never see him any more? Never any more, dear kinsfolk and friends; never any more, my children! Yes, my children have lost their kind father, our relations and friends have lost their good kinsman and their trusty friend, the household has lost its master, and I have lost everything!"

She took the hand of the dead again, and knelt, so that she might press her face close to his as she kissed it. The servants' cry, "*The master is dead!*" was again repeated three times.

Just then the eldest son came to his mother to say, "The people from Saint Laurent have just come, mother; we want some wine for them."

"Take the keys," she said in a low tone, and in a different voice from that in which she had just expressed her grief; "you are the master of the house, my son; see that they receive the welcome that your father would have given them; do not let them find any change."

"Let me have one more long look," she went on. "But, alas! my good husband, you do not feel my presence now, I cannot bring back warmth to you! I only wish that I could comfort you still, could let you know that so long as I live you will dwell in the heart that you made glad, could tell you that I shall be happy in the memory of my happiness—that the dear thought of you will live on in this room. Yes, so long as God spares me, this room shall be filled with memories of you. Hear my vow, dear husband! Your couch shall always remain as it is now. I will sleep in it no more, since you are dead; henceforward, while I live, it shall be cold and empty. With you, I have lost all that makes a woman; her master, husband, father, friend, companion, and helpmate; I have lost all!"

"*The master is dead!*" the servants wailed. Others raised the cry, and the lament became general. The widow took a pair of scissors that hung at her waist, cut off her hair, and laid the locks in her husband's hand. Deep silence fell on them all.

"That act means that she will not marry again," said Benassis; "this determination was expected by many of the relatives."

"Take it, dear lord!" she said; her emotion brought a tremor to her voice that went to the hearts of all who heard her. "I have sworn to be faithful; I give this pledge to you to keep in the grave. We shall thus be united forever, and through love of your children I will live on among the family in whom you used to feel yourself young again. Oh! that you could hear me, my husband! the pride and joy of my heart! Oh! that you could know that all my power to live, now you are dead, will yet come from you; for I

shall live to carry out your sacred wishes and to honor your memory."

Benassis pressed Genestas's hand as an invitation to follow him, and they went out. By this time the first room was full of people who had come from another mountain commune; all of them waited in meditative silence, as if the sorrow and grief that brooded over the house had already taken possession of them. As Benassis and the commandant crossed the threshold, they overheard a few words that passed between one of the newcomers and the eldest son of the late owner.

"Then when did he die?"

"Oh!" exclaimed the eldest son, a man of five-and-twenty years of age, "I did not see him die. He asked for me, and I was not there!" His voice was broken with sobs, but he went on: "He said to me the night before, 'You must go over to the town, my boy, and pay our taxes; my funeral will put that out of your minds, and we shall be behindhand, a thing that has never happened before.' It seemed the best thing to do, so I went; and while I was gone, he died, and I never received his last embrace. I have always been at his side, but he did not see me near him at the last in my place where I had always been."

*"The master is dead!"*

"Alas! he is dead, and I was not there to receive his last words and his latest sigh. And what did the taxes matter? Would it not have been better to lose all our money than to leave home just then? Could all that we have make up to me for the loss of his last farewell? No. *Mon Dieu!* If *your* father falls ill, Jean, do not go away and leave him, or you will lay up a lifelong regret for yourself."

"My friend," said Genestas, "I have seen thousands of men die on the battlefield; death did not wait to let their children bid them farewell; take comfort, you are not the only one."

"But a father who was such a good man!" he replied, bursting into fresh tears.

Benassis took Genestas in the direction of the farm buildings.

"The funeral oration will only cease when the body has been laid in its coffin," said the doctor, "and the weeping woman's language will grow more vivid and impassioned all the while. But a woman only acquires the right to speak in such a strain before so imposing an audience by a blameless life. If the widow could reproach herself with the smallest of shortcomings, she would not dare to utter a word; for if she did, she would pronounce her own condemnation, she would be at the same time her own accuser and judge. Is there not something sublime in this custom which thus judges the living and the dead? They only begin to wear mourning after a week has elapsed, when it is publicly worn at a meeting of all the family. Their near relations spend the week with the widow and children, to help them to set their affairs in order and to console them. A family gathering at such a time produces a great effect on the minds of the mourners; the consideration for others which possesses men when they are brought into close contact acts as a restraint on violent grief. On the last day, when the mourning garb has been assumed, a solemn banquet is given, and their relations take leave of them. All this is taken very seriously. Anyone who was slack in fulfilling his duties after the death of the head of a family would have no one at his own funeral."

The doctor had reached the cowhouse as he spoke; he opened the door and made the commandant enter, that he might show it to him.

"All our cowhouses have been rebuilt after this pattern, captain. Look! Is it not magnificent?"

Genestas could not help admiring the huge place. The cows and oxen stood in two rows, with their tails towards the side walls, and their heads in the middle of the shed. Access to the stalls was afforded by a fairly wide space between them and the wall; you could see their horned heads and shining eyes through the lattice work, so that it was easy for the master to run his eyes over the cattle. The fodder was placed on some staging erected above the stalls, so that it fell into the racks below without waste of labor or material. There was a wide-paved space down the center,



which was kept clean, and ventilated by a thorough draught of air.

"In the winter time," Benassis said, as he walked with Genestas down the middle of the cowhouse, "both men and women do their work here together in the evenings. The tables are set out here, and in this way the people keep themselves warm without going to any expense. The sheep are housed in the same way. You would not believe how quickly the beasts fall into orderly ways. I have often wondered to see them come in; each knows her proper place, and allows those who take precedence to pass in before her. Look! there is just room enough in each stall to do the milking and to rub the cattle down; and the floor slopes a little to facilitate drainage."

"One can judge of everything else from the sight of this cowhouse," said Genestas; "without flattery, these are great results indeed!"

"We have had some trouble to bring them about," Benassis answered; "but then, see what fine cattle they are."

"They are splendid beasts certainly; you had good reason to praise them to me," answered Genestas.

"Now," said the doctor, when he had mounted his horse and passed under the gateway, "we are going over some of the newly cleared waste, and through the corn land. I have christened this little corner of our commune 'La Beauce.'"

For about an hour they rode at a foot pace across fields in a state of high cultivation, on which the soldier complimented the doctor; then they came down the mountain side into the township again, talking whenever the pace of their horses allowed them to do so. At last they reached a narrow glen, down which they rode into the main valley.

"I promised yesterday," Benassis said to Genestas, "to show you one of the two soldiers who left the army and came back to us after the fall of Napoleon. We shall find him somewhere hereabouts, if I am not mistaken. The mountain streams flow into a sort of natural reservoir or tarn up here; the earth they bring down has silted it up, and he is engaged in clearing it out. But if you are to take any

interest in the man, I must tell you his history. His name is Gondrin. He was only eighteen years old when he was drawn in the great conscription of 1792, and drafted into a corps of gunners. He served as a private soldier in Napoleon's campaigns in Italy, followed him to Egypt, and came back from the East after the Peace of Amiens. In the time of the Empire he was incorporated in the Pontoon Troop of the Guard, and was constantly on active service in Germany; lastly, the poor fellow made the Russian campaign."

"We are brothers-in-arms then, to some extent," said Genestas; "I have made the same campaigns. Only an iron frame could stand the tricks played by so many different climates. My word for it, those who are still standing on their stumps after marching over Italy, Egypt, Germany, Portugal, and Russia must have applied to Providence and taken out a patent for living."

"Just so, you will see a solid fragment of a man," answered Benassis. "You know all about the Retreat from Moscow; it is useless to tell you about it. This man I have told you of is one of the pontooners of the Beresina; he helped to construct the bridge by which the army made the passage, and stood waist-deep in water to drive in the first piles. General Eblé, who was in command of the pontooners, could only find forty-two men who were plucky enough, in Gondrin's phrase, to tackle that business. The general himself came down to the stream to hearten and cheer the men, promising each of them a pension of a thousand francs and the Cross of the Legion of Honor. The first who went down into the Beresina had his leg taken off by a block of ice, and the man himself was washed away; but you will better understand the difficulty of the task when you hear the end of the story. Of the forty-two volunteers, Gondrin is the only one alive to-day. Thirty-nine of them lost their lives in the Beresina, and the two others died miserably in a Polish hospital.

"The poor fellow himself only returned from Wilna in 1814, to find the Bourbons restored to power. General Eblé (of whom Gondrin cannot speak without tears in his eyes)

was dead. The pontooner was deaf, and his health was shattered; and as he could neither read nor write, he found no one left to help him or to plead his cause. He begged his way to Paris, and while there made application at the War Office, not for the thousand francs of extra pension which had been promised to him, nor yet for the Cross of the Legion of Honor, but only for the bare pension due to him after twenty-two years of service, and I do not know how many campaigns. He did not obtain his pension or his traveling expenses; he did not even receive his arrears of pay. He spent a year in making fruitless solicitations, holding out his hands in vain to those whom he had saved; and at the end of it he came back here, sorely disheartened but resigned to his fate. This hero unknown to fame does draining work on the land, for which he is paid ten sous the fathom. He is accustomed to working in a marshy soil, and so, as he says, he gets jobs which no one else cares to take. He can make about three francs a day by clearing out ponds, or draining meadows that lie under water. His deafness makes him seem surly, and he is not naturally inclined to say very much, but there is a good deal in him.

"We are very good friends. He dines with me on the day of Austerlitz, on the Emperor's birthday, and on the anniversary of the disaster at Waterloo, and during the dessert he always receives a napoleon to pay for his wine every quarter. Everyone in the commune shares in my feeling of respect for him; if he would allow them to support him, nothing would please them better. At every house to which he goes the people follow my example, and show their esteem by asking him to dine with them. It is a feeling of pride that leads him to work, and it is only as a portrait of the Emperor that he can be induced to take my twenty-franc piece. He has been deeply wounded by the injustice that has been done him; but I think regret for the Cross is greater than the desire for his pension.

"He has one great consolation. After the bridges had been constructed across the Beresina, General Eblé presented such of the pontooners as were not disabled to the Emperor, and Napoleon embraced poor Gondrin—perhaps but for that

accolade he would have died ere now. This memory and the hope that some day Napoleon will return are all that Gondrin lives by. Nothing will ever persuade him that Napoleon is dead, and so convinced is he that the Emperor's captivity is wholly and solely due to the English, that I believe he would be ready on the slightest pretext to take the life of the best-natured alderman that ever traveled for pleasure in foreign parts."

"Let us go on as fast as possible!" cried Genestas. He had listened to the doctor's story, with rapt attention, and now seemed to recover consciousness of his surroundings. "Let us hurry! I long to see that man!"

Both of them put their horses to a gallop.

"The other soldier that I spoke of," Benassis went on, "is another of those men of iron who have knocked about everywhere with our armies. His life, like that of all French soldiers, has been made up of bullets, saber strokes, and victories; he has had a very rough time of it, and has only worn the woolen epaulettes. He has a fanatical affection for Napoleon, who conferred the Cross upon him on the field of Valentina. He is of a jovial turn of mind, and like a genuine Dauphinois, has always looked after his own interests, has his pension, and the honors of the Legion. Goguelat is his name. He was an infantry-man, who exchanged into the Guard in 1812. He is Gondrin's better half, so to speak, for the two have taken up house together. They both lodge with a peddler's widow, and make over their money to her. She is a kind soul, who boards them and looks after them and their clothes as if they were her children.

"In his quality of local postman, Goguelat carries all the news of the countryside, and a good deal of practice acquired in this way has made him an orator in great request at up-sittings, and the champion teller of stories in the district. Gondrin looks upon him as a very knowing fellow, and something of a wit; and whenever Goguelat talks about Napoleon, his comrade seems to understand what he is saying from the movement of his lips. There will be an up-sitting (as they call it) in one of my barns to-night. If these two come over to it, and we can manage to see without being seen, I shall

treat you to a view of the spectacle. But here we are, close to the ditch, and I do not see my friend the pontooner."

The doctor and the commandant looked everywhere about them; Gondrin's soldier's coat lay there beside a heap of black mud, and his wheelbarrow, spade, and pick-ax were visible, but there was no sign of the man himself along the various pebbly watercourses, for the wayward mountain streams had hollowed out channels that were almost overgrown with low bushes.

"He cannot be so very far away. Gondrin! Where are you?" shouted Benassis.

Genestas first saw the curling smoke from a tobacco pipe rise among the brushwood on a bank of rubbish not far away. He pointed it out to the doctor, who shouted again. The old pontooner raised his head at this, recognized the mayor, and came towards them down a little pathway.

"Well, old friend," said Benassis, making a sort of speaking-trumpet with his hand. "Here is a comrade of yours, who was out in Egypt, come to see you."

Gondrin raised his face at once and gave Genestas a swift, keen, and searching look, one of those glances by which old soldiers are wont at once to take the measure of any impending danger. He saw the red ribbon that the commandant wore, and made a silent and respectful military salute.

"If the Little Corporal were alive," the officer cried, "you would have the Cross of the Legion of Honor and a handsome pension besides, for every man who wore epaulettes on the other side of the river owed his life to you on the 1st of October 1812. But I am not the Minister of War, my friend," the commandant added as he dismounted, and with a sudden rush of feeling he grasped the laborer's hand.

The old pontooner drew himself up at the words, he knocked the ashes from his pipe, and put it in his pocket.

"I only did my duty, sir," he said, with his head bent down; "but others have not done their duty by me. They asked for my papers! Why, the Twenty-ninth Bulletin, I told them, must do instead of my papers!"

"But you must make another application, comrade. You

are bound to have justice done you in these days, if influence is brought to bear in the right quarter."

"Justice!" cried the veteran. The doctor and the commandant shuddered at the tone in which he spoke.

In the brief pause that followed, both the horsemen looked at the man before them, who seemed like a fragment of the wreck of great armies which Napoleon had filled with men of bronze sought out from among three generations. Gondrin was certainly a splendid specimen of that seemingly indestructible mass of men which might be cut to pieces but never gave way. The old man was scarcely five feet high, wide across the shoulders, and broad-chested; his face was sunburned, furrowed with deep wrinkles, but the outlines were still firm in spite of the hollows in it, and one could see even now that it was the face of a soldier. It was a rough-hewn countenance, his forehead seemed like a block of granite; but there was a weary expression about his face, and the gray hairs hung scantily about his head, as if life were waning there already. Everything about him indicated unusual strength; his arms were covered thickly with hair, and so was the chest, which was visible through the opening of his coarse shirt. In spite of his almost crooked legs, he held himself firm and erect, as if nothing could shake him.

"Justice," he said once more; "there never will be justice for the like of us. We cannot send bailiffs to the Government to demand our dues for us; and as the wallet must be filled somehow," he said, striking his stomach, "we cannot afford to wait. Moreover, these gentry who lead snug lives in government offices may talk and talk, but their words are not good to eat, so I have come back again here to draw my pay out of the commonalty," he said, striking the mud with his spade.

"Things must not be left in that way, old comrade," said Genestas. "I owe my life to you, and it would be ungrateful of me if I did not lend you a hand. I have not forgotten the passage over the bridges in the Beresina, and it is fresh in the memories of some brave fellows of my acquaintance; they will back me up, and the nation shall give you the recognition you deserve."

"You will be called a Bonapartist! Please do not meddle in the matter, sir. I have gone to the rear now, and I have dropped into my hole here like a spent bullet. But after riding on camels through the desert, and drinking my glass by the fireside in Moscow, I never thought that I should come back to die here beneath the trees that my father planted," and he began to work again.

"Poor old man!" said Genestas, as they turned to go. "I should do the same if I were in his place; we have lost our father. Everything seems dark to me now that I have seen that man's hopelessness," he went on, addressing Benassis; "he does not know how much I am interested in him, and he will think that I am one of those gilded rascals who cannot feel for a soldier's sufferings."

He turned quickly and went back, grasped the veteran's hand, and spoke loudly in his ear—

"I swear by the Cross I wear—the Cross of Honor it used to be—that I will do all that man can do to obtain your pension for you; even if I have to swallow a dozen refusals from the Minister, and to petition the King and the Dauphin and the whole shop!"

Old Gondrin quivered as he heard the words. He looked hard at Genestas and said, "Haven't you served in the ranks?" The commandant nodded. The pontooner wiped his hand and took that of Genestas, which he grasped warmly and said—

"I made the army a present of my life, general, when I waded out into the river yonder, and if I am still alive, it is all so much to the good. One moment! Do you care to see to the bottom of it? Well, then, ever since *somebody* was pulled down from his place, I have ceased to care about anything. And, after all," he went on more cheerfully, as he pointed to the land, "they have made over twenty thousand francs to me here, and I am taking it out in detail, as *he* used to say!"

"Well, then, comrade," said Genestas, touched by the grandeur of this forgiveness, "at least you shall have the only thing that you cannot prevent me from giving to you, here below." The commandant tapped his heart, looked once

more at the old pontooner, mounted his horse again, and went his way side by side with Benassis.

"Such cruelty as this on the part of a government foments the strife between rich and poor," said the doctor. "People who exercise a little brief authority have never given a serious thought to the consequences that must follow an act of injustice done to a man of the people. It is true that a poor man who needs must work for his daily bread cannot long keep up the struggle; but he can talk, and his words find an echo in every sufferer's heart, so that one bad case of this kind is multiplied, for everyone who hears of it feels it as a personal wrong, and the heaven works. Even this is not so serious, but something far worse comes of it. Among the people, these cases of injustice bring about a chronic state of smothered hatred for their social superiors. The middle class becomes the poor man's enemy; they lie without the bounds of his moral code, he tells lies to them and robs them without scruple; indeed, theft ceases to be a crime or a misdemeanor, and is looked upon as an act of vengeance.

"When an official, who ought to see that the poor have justice done them, uses them ill and cheats them of their due, how can we expect the poor starving wretches to bear their troubles meekly and to respect the rights of property? It makes me shudder to think that some under-strapper whose business it is to dust papers in a government office, has pocketed Gondrin's promised thousand francs of pension. And yet there are folk who, never having measured the excess of the people's sufferings, accuse the people of excess in the day of their vengeance! When a government has done more harm than good to individuals, its further existence depends on the merest accident, the masses square the account after their fashion by upsetting it. A statesman ought always to imagine Justice with the poor at her feet, for justice was only invented for the poor."

When they had come within the compass of the township, Benassis saw two people walking along the road in front of them, and turned to his companion, who had been absorbed for some time in thought.

"You have seen a veteran soldier resigned to his life of



wretchedness, and now you are about to see an old agricultural laborer who is submitting to the same lot. The man there ahead of us has dug and sown and toiled for others all his life."

Genestas looked and saw an old laborer making his way along the road, in company with an aged woman. He seemed to be afflicted with some form of sciatica, and limped painfully along. His feet were incased in a wretched pair of sabots, and a sort of wallet hung over his shoulder. Several tools lay in the bottom of the bag; their handles, blackened with long use and the sweat of toil, rattled audibly together; while the other end of the wallet behind his shoulder held bread, some walnuts, and a few fresh onions. His legs seemed to be warped, as it were, his back was bent by continual toil; he stooped so much as he walked that he leant on a long stick to steady himself. His snow-white hair escaped from under a battered hat, grown rusty by exposure to all sorts of weather, and mended here and there with visible stitches of white thread. His clothes, made of a kind of rough canvas, were a mass of patches of contrasting colors. This piece of humanity in ruins lacked none of the characteristics that appeal to our hearts when we see ruins of other kinds.

His wife held herself somewhat more erect. Her clothing was likewise a mass of rags, and the cap that she wore was of the coarsest materials. On her back she carried a rough earthen jar by means of a thong passed through the handles of the great pitcher, which was round in shape and flattened at the sides. They both looked up when they heard the horses approaching, saw that it was Benassis, and stopped.

The man had worked till he was almost past work, and his faithful helpmate was no less broken with toil. It was painful to see how the summer sun and the winter's cold had blackened their faces, and covered them with such deep wrinkles that their features were hardly discernible. It was not their life history that had been engraven on their faces; but it might be gathered from their attitude and bearing. Incessant toil had been the lot of both; they had worked and suffered together; they had had many troubles

and few joys to share; and now, like captives grown accustomed to their prison, they seemed to be too familiar with wretchedness to heed it, and to take everything as it came. Yet a certain frank light-heartedness was not lacking in their faces; and on a closer view, their monotonous life, the lot of so many a poor creature, well-nigh seemed an enviable one. Trouble had set its unmistakable mark upon them, but petty cares had left no traces there.

"Well, my good Father Moreau, I suppose there is no help for it, and you must always be working?"

"Yes, M. Benassis, there are one or two more bits of waste that I mean to clear for you before I knock off work," the old man answered cheerfully, and a light shone in his little black eyes.

"Is that wine that your wife there is carrying? If you will not take a rest now, you ought at any rate to take wine."

"I take a rest? I should not know what to do with myself. The sun and the fresh air put life into me when I am out of doors and busy grubbing up the land. As to the wine, sir, yes, that is wine sure enough, and it is all through your contriving I know that the Mayor at Courteuil lets us have it for next to nothing. Ah, you managed it very cleverly, but, all the same, I know you had a hand in it."

"Oh! come, come! Good-day, mother. You are going to work on that bit of land of Champferlu's to-day of course?"

"Yes, sir; I made a beginning there yesterday evening."

"Capital!" said Benassis. "It must be a satisfaction to you, at times, to see this hillside. You two have broken up almost the whole of the land on it yourselves."

"Lord! yes, sir," answered the old woman, "it has been our doing! We have fairly earned our bread."

"Work, you see, and land to cultivate are the poor man's consols. That good man would think himself disgraced if he went into the poorhouse or begged for his bread; he would choose to die pick-ax in hand, out in the open, in the sunlight. Faith, he bears a proud heart in him. He has worked until work has become his very life; and yet death has no terrors for him! He is a profound philosopher,

little as he suspects it. Old Moreau's case suggested the idea to me of founding an almshouse for the country people of the district; a refuge for those who, after working hard all their lives, have reached an honorable old age of poverty.

"I had by no means expected to make the fortune which I have acquired here; indeed, I myself have no use for it, for a man who has fallen from the pinnacle of his hopes needs very little. It costs but little to live, the idler's life alone is a costly one, and I am not sure that the unproductive consumer is not robbing the community at large. There was some discussion about Napoleon's pension after his fall; it came to his ears, and he said that five francs a day and a horse to ride was all that he needed. I meant to have no more to do with money when I came here; but after a time I saw that money means power, and that it is in fact a necessity, if any good is to be done. So I have made arrangements in my will for turning my house into an almshouse, in which old people who have not Moreau's fierce independence can end their days. Part of the income of nine thousand francs brought in by the mill and the rest of my property will be devoted to giving outdoor relief in hard winters to those who really stand in need of it.

"This foundation will be under the control of the Municipal Council, with the addition of the curé, who is to be president; and in this way the money made in the district will be returned to it. In my will I have laid down the lines on which this institution is to be conducted; it would be tedious to go over them, it is enough to say that I have thought it all out very carefully. I have also created a trust fund, which will some day enable the commune to award several scholarships for children who show signs of promise in art or science. So, even after I am gone, my work of civilization will continue. When you have set yourself to do anything, Captain Bluteau, something within you urges you on, you see, and you cannot bear to leave it unfinished. This craving within us for order and for perfection is one of the signs that point most surely to a future existence. Now, let us quicken our pace, I have my round to finish, and there are five or six more patients still to be visited."

They cantered on for some time in silence, till Benassis said laughingly to his companion, "Come now, Captain Bluteau, you have drawn me out and made me chatter like a magpie, and you have not said a syllable about your own history, which must be an interesting one. When a soldier has come to your time of life, he has seen so much that he must have more than one adventure to tell about."

"Why, my history has been simply the history of the army," answered Genestas. "Soldiers are all after one pattern. Never in command, always giving and taking saber-cuts in my place. I have lived just like everybody else. I have been wherever Napoleon led us, and have borne a part in every battle in which the Imperial Guard has struck a blow; but everybody knows all about these events. A soldier has to look after his horse, to endure hunger and thirst at times, to fight whenever there is fighting to be done, and there you have the whole history of his life. As simple as saying good-day, is it not? Then there are battles in which your horse casts a shoe at the outset, and lands you in a quandary; and as far as you are concerned, that is the whole of it. In short, I have seen so many countries, that seeing them has come to be a matter of course; and I have seen so many men die, that I have come to value my own life at nothing."

"But you yourself must have been in danger at times, and it would be interesting to hear you tell of your personal adventures."

"Perhaps," answered the commandant.

"Well, then, tell me about the adventures that made the deepest impression upon you. Come! do not hesitate. I shall not think that you are wanting in modesty even if you should tell me of some piece of heroism on your part; and when a man is quite sure that he will not be misunderstood, ought he not to find a kind of pleasure in saying, 'I did thus'?"

"Very well, then, I will tell you about something that gives me a pang of remorse from time to time. During fifteen years of warfare it never once happened that I killed a man, save in legitimate defense of self. We are drawn

up in line, and we charge; and if we do not strike down those before us, they will begin to draw blood without asking leave, so you have to kill if you do not mean to be killed, and your conscience is quite easy. But once I broke a comrade's back; it happened in a singular way, and it has been a painful thing to me to think of afterwards—the man's dying grimace haunts me at times. But you shall judge for yourself.

“It was during the retreat from Moscow,” the commandant went on. “The Grand Army had ceased to be itself; we were more like a herd of overdriven cattle. Good-by to discipline! The regiments had lost sight of their colors, everyone was his own master, and the Emperor (one need not scruple to say it) knew that it was useless to attempt to exert his authority when things had gone so far. When we reached Studzianka, a little place on the other side of the Beresina, we came upon human dwellings for the first time after several days. There were barns and peasants' cabins to destroy, and pits full of potatoes and beetroot; the army had been without victual, and now it fairly ran riot, the first comers, as you might expect, making a clean sweep of everything.

“I was one of the last to come up. Luckily for me, sleep was the one thing that I longed for just then. I caught sight of a barn and went into it. I looked round and saw a score of generals and officers of high rank, all of them men who, without flattery, might be called great. Junot was there, and Narbonne, the Emperor's aid-de-camp, and all the chiefs of the army. There were common soldiers there as well, not one of whom would have given up his bed of straw to a marshal of France. Some who were leaning their backs against the wall had dropped off to sleep where they stood, because there was no room to lie down; others lay stretched out on the floor—it was a mass of men packed together so closely for the sake of warmth, that I looked about in vain for a nook to lie down in. I walked over this flooring of human bodies; some of the men growled, the others said nothing, but no one budged. They would not have moved out of the way of a cannon ball just then; but

under the circumstances, one was not obliged to practice the maxims laid down by the Child's Guide to Manners, Groping about, I saw at the end of the barn a sort of ledge up above in the roof; no one had felt equal to the effort. I clambered up and ensconced myself upon it; and as I lay there at full length, I looked down at the men huddled together like sheep below. It was a pitiful sight, yet it almost made me laugh. A man here and there was gnawing a frozen carrot, with a kind of animal satisfaction expressed in his face; and thunderous snores came from generals who lay muffled up in ragged cloaks. The whole barn was lighted by a blazing pine log; it might have set the place on fire, and no one would have troubled to get up and put it out.

"I lay down on my back, and, naturally, just before I dropped off, my eyes traveled to the roof above me, and then I saw that the main beam which bore the weight of the joists was being slightly shaken from east to west. The blessed thing danced about in fine style. 'Gentlemen,' said I, 'one of our friends outside has a mind to warm himself at our expense.' A few moments more and the beam was sure to come down. 'Gentlemen! gentlemen!' I shouted, 'we shall all be killed in a minute! Look at the beam there!' and I made such a noise that my bedfellows awoke at last. Well, sir, they all stared up at the beam, and then went off to sleep again, while those who were eating did not even stop to answer me.

"Seeing how things were, there was nothing for it but to get up and leave my place, and run the risk of finding it taken by somebody else, for all the lives of this heap of heroes were at stake. So out I go. I turn the corner of the barn and come upon a great devil of a Würtemberger, who was tugging at the beam with a certain enthusiasm. 'Aho! aho!' I shouted, trying to make him understand that he must desist from his toil. '*Gehe mir aus dem Gesicht, oder ich schlag dich todt!*—Get out of my sight, or I will kill you,' he cried. 'Ah! yes, just so, *Qué mire aous dem guesit,*' I answered; 'but that is not the point.' I picked up his gun that he had left on the ground, and broke his back

with it; then I turned in again, and went off to sleep. Now you know the whole business."

"But that was a case of self-defense, in which one man suffered for the good of many, so you have nothing to reproach yourself with," said Benassis.

"The rest of them thought that it had only been my fancy; but fancy or no, a good many of them are living comfortably in fine houses to-day, without feeling their hearts oppressed by gratitude."

"Then would you only do people a good turn in order to receive that exorbitant interest called gratitude?" said Benassis, laughing. "That would be asking a great deal for your outlay."

"Oh, I know quite well that all the merit of a good deed evaporates at once if it benefits the doer in the slightest degree," said Genestas. "If he tells the story of it, the toll brought in to his vanity is a sufficient substitute for gratitude. But if every doer of kindly actions always held his tongue about them, those who reaped the benefits would hardly say very much either. Now the people, according to your system, stand in need of examples, and how are they to hear of them amid this general reticence? Again, there is this poor pontooner of ours, who saved the whole French army, and who was never able to tell his tale to any purpose; suppose that he had lost the use of his limbs, would the consciousness of what he had done have found him in bread? Answer me that, philosopher!"

"Perhaps the rules of morality cannot be absolute," Benassis answered; "though this is a dangerous idea, for it leaves the egotist free to settle cases of conscience in his own favor. Listen, captain; is not the man who never swerves from the principles of morality greater than he who transgresses them, even through necessity? Would not our veteran, dying of hunger, and unable to help himself, be worthy to rank with Homer? Human life is doubtless a final trial of virtue as of genius, for both of which a better world is waiting. Virtue and genius seem to me to be the fairest forms of that complete and constant surrender of self that Jesus Christ came among men to teach. Genius

sheds its light in the world and lives in poverty all its days, and virtue sacrifices itself in silence for the general good."

"I quite agree with you, sir," said Genestas; "but those who dwell on earth are men after all, and not angels; we are not perfect."

"That is quite true," Benassis answered. "And as for errors, I myself have abused the indulgence. But ought we not to aim, at any rate, at perfection? Is not virtue a fair ideal which the soul must always keep before it, a standard set up by Heaven?"

"Amen," said the soldier. "An upright man is a magnificent thing, I grant you; but, on the other hand, you must admit that Virtue is a divinity who may indulge in a scrap of gossip now and then in the strictest propriety."

The doctor smiled, but there was a melancholy bitterness in his tone as he said, "Ah! sir, you regard things with the lenience natural to those who live at peace with themselves; and I with all the severity of one who sees much that he would fain obliterate in the story of his life."

The two horsemen reached a cottage beside the bed of the torrent, the doctor dismounted and went into the house. Genestas, on the threshold, looked over the bright spring landscape that lay without, and then at the dark interior of the cottage, where a man was lying in bed. Benassis examined his patient, and suddenly exclaimed, "My good woman, it is no use my coming here unless you carry out my instructions! You have been giving him bread; you want to kill your husband, I suppose? Botheration! If after this you give him anything besides tisane of couch-grass, I will never set foot in here again, and you can look where you like for another doctor."

"But, dear M. Benassis, my old man was starving, and when he had eaten nothing for a whole fortnight——"

"Oh, yes, yes. Now will you listen to me. If you let your husband eat a single mouthful of bread before I give him leave to take solid food, you will kill him, do you hear?"

"He shall not have anything, sir. Is he any better?" she asked, following the doctor to the door.

"Why, no. You have made him worse by feeding him.



Shall I never get it into your stupid heads that you must not stuff people who are being dieted?

"The peasants are incorrigible," Benassis went on, speaking to Genestas. "If a patient has eaten nothing for two or three days, they think he is at death's door, and they cram him with soup or wine or something. Here is a wretched woman for you that has all but killed her husband."

"Kill my husband with a little mite of a sop in wine!"

"Certainly, my good woman. It amazes me that he is still alive after that mess you cooked for him. Mind that you do exactly as I have told you."

"Yes, dear sir, I would far rather die myself than lose him."

"Oh! as to that I shall soon see. I shall come again to-morrow evening to bleed him."

"Let us walk along the side of the stream," Benassis said to Genestas; "there is only a footpath between this cottage and the next house where I must pay a call. That man's little boy will hold our horses."

"You must admire this lovely valley of ours a little," he went on; "it is like an English garden, is it not? The laborer who lives in the cottage which we are going to visit has never got over the death of one of his children. The eldest boy, he was only a lad, would try to do a man's work last harvest-tide; it was beyond his strength, and before the autumn was out he died of a decline. This is the first case of really strong fatherly love that has come under my notice. As a rule, when their children die, the peasants' regret is for the loss of a useful chattel, and a part of their stock-in-trade, and the older the child, the heavier their sense of loss. A grown-up son or daughter is so much capital to the parents. But this poor fellow really loved that boy of his. 'Nothing can comfort me for my loss,' he said one day when I came across him out in the fields. He had forgotten all about his work, and was standing there motionless, leaning on his scythe; he had picked up his hone, it lay in his hand, and he had forgotten to use it. He has never spoken since of his grief to me, but he has grown sad and silent. Just now it is one of his little girls who is ill."

Benassis and his guest reached the little house as they talked. It stood beside a pathway that led to a bark-mill. They saw a man about forty years of age, standing under a willow tree, eating bread that had been rubbed with a clove of garlic.

"Well, Gasnier, is the little one doing better?"

"I do not know, sir," he said dejectedly, "you will see; my wife is sitting with her. In spite of all your care, I am very much afraid that death will come to empty my home for me."

"Do not lose heart, Gasnier. Death is too busy to take up his abode in any dwelling."

Benassis went into the house, followed by the father. Half an hour later he came out again. The mother was with him this time, and he spoke to her, "You need have no anxiety about her now; follow out my instructions; she is out of danger."

"If you are growing tired of this sort of thing," the doctor said to the officer, as he mounted his horse, "I can put you on the way to the town, and you can return."

"No, I am not tired of it, I give you my word."

"But you will only see cottages everywhere, and they are all alike; nothing, to outward seeming, is more monotonous than the country."

"Let us go on," said the officer.

They rode on in this way for several hours, and after going from one side of the canton to the other, they returned towards evening to the precincts of the town.

"I must just go over there," the doctor said to Genestas, as he pointed out a place where a cluster of elm-trees grew. "Those trees may possibly be two hundred years old," he went on, "and that is where the woman lives, on whose account the lad came to fetch me last night at dinner, with a message that she had turned quite white."

"Was it anything serious?"

"No," said Benassis, "an effect of pregnancy. It is the last month with her, a time at which some women suffer from spasms. But by way of precaution, I must go in any case to make sure that there are no further alarming

symptoms; I shall see her through her confinement myself. And, moreover, I should like to show you one of our new industries; there is a brick-field here. It is a good road; shall we gallop?"

"Will your animal keep up with mine?" asked Genestas. "Heigh! Neptune!" he called to his horse, and in a moment the officer had been carried far ahead, and was lost to sight in a cloud of dust, but in spite of the paces of his horse he still heard the doctor beside him. At a word from Benassis his own horse left the commandant so far behind that the latter only came up with him at the gate of the brick-field, where the doctor was quietly fastening the bridle to the gate-post.

"The devil take it!" cried Genestas, after a look at the horse, that was neither sweated nor blown. "What kind of animal have you there?"

"Ah!" said the doctor, "you took him for a screw! The history of this fine fellow would take up too much time just now; let it suffice to say that Roustan is a thorough-bred barb from the Atlas mountains, and a Barbary horse is as good as an Arab. This one of mine will gallop up the mountain roads without turning a hair, and will never miss his footing in a canter along the brink of a precipice. He was a present to me, and I think that I deserved it, for in this way a father sought to repay me for his daughter's life. She is one of the wealthiest heiresses in Europe, and she was at the brink of death when I found her on the road to Savoy. If I were to tell you how I cured that young lady, you would take me for a quack. Aha! that is the sound of the bells on the horses and the rumbling of a wagon; it is coming along this way; let us see, perhaps that is Vigneau himself: and if so, take a good look at him!"

In another moment the officer saw a team of four huge horses, like those which are owned by prosperous farmers in Brie. The harness, the little bells, and the knots of braid in their manes, were clean and smart. The great wagon itself was painted bright blue, and perched aloft in it sat a stalwart, sunburnt youth, who shouldered his whip like a gun and whistled a tune.

"No," said Benassis, "that is only the wagoner. But see how the master's prosperity in business is reflected by all his belongings, even by the carter's wagon! Is it not a sign of a capacity for business not very often met with in remote country places?"

"Yes, yes, it all looks very smart indeed," the officer answered.

"Well, Vigneau has two more wagons and teams like that one, and he has a small pony besides for business purposes, for he does a trade over a wide area. And only four years ago he had nothing in the world! Stay, that is a mistake—he had some debts. But let us go in."

"Is Mme. Vigneau in the house?" Benassis asked of the young wagoner.

"She is out in the garden, sir; I saw her just now by the hedge down yonder; I will go and tell her that you are here."

Genestas followed Benassis across a wide open space with a hedge about it. In one corner various heaps of clay had been piled up, destined for tiles and pantiles, and a stack of brushwood and logs (fuel for the kiln, no doubt) lay in another part of the inclosure. Farther away some workmen were pounding chalk stones and tempering the clay in a space inclosed by hurdles. The tiles, both round and square, were made under the great elms opposite the gateway, in a vast green arbor bounded by the roofs of the drying-shed, and near this last the yawning mouth of the kiln was visible. Some long-handled shovels lay about the worn cinder path. A second row of buildings had been erected parallel with these. There was a sufficiently wretched dwelling which housed the family, and some outbuildings—sheds and stables and a barn. The cleanliness that predominated throughout, and the thorough repair in which everything was kept, spoke well for the vigilance of the master's eyes. Some poultry and pigs wandered at large over the field.

"Vigneau's predecessor," said Benassis, "was a good-for-nothing, a lazy rascal who cared about nothing but drink. He had been a workman himself; he could keep a fire in his

kiln and could put a price on his work, and that was about all he knew; he had no energy, and no idea of business. If no one came to buy his wares of him, they simply stayed on hand and were spoiled, and so he lost the value of them. So he died of want at last. He had ill-treated his wife till she was almost idiotic, and she lived in a state of abject wretchedness. It was so painful to see this laziness and incurable stupidity, and I so much disliked the sight of the tile-works, that I never came this way if I could help it. Luckily, both the man and his wife were old people. One fine day the tile-maker had a paralytic stroke, and I had him removed to the hospital at Grenoble at once. The owner of the tile-works agreed to take it over without disputing about its condition, and I looked round for new tenants who would take their part in improving the industries of the canton.

“Minc. Gravier’s waiting-maid had married a poor workman, who was earning so little with the potter who employed him that he could not support his household. He listened to my advice, and actually had sufficient courage to take a lease of our tile-works, when he had not so much as a penny. He came and took up his abode here, taught his wife, her aged mother, and his own mother how to make tiles, and made workmen of them. How they managed, I do not know, upon my honor! Vigneau probably borrowed fuel to heat his kiln, he certainly worked by day, and fetched in his materials in basket-loads by night; in short, no one knew what boundless energy he brought to bear upon his enterprise; and the two old mothers, clad in rags, worked like negroes. In this way Vigneau contrived to fire several batches, and lived for the first year on bread that was hardly won by the toil of his household.

“Still, he made a living. His courage, patience, and sterling worth interested many people in him, and he began to be known. He was indefatigable. He would hurry over to Grenoble in the morning, and sell his bricks and tiles there; then he would return home about the middle of the day, and go back again to the town at night. He seemed to be in several places at once. Towards the end of the first year

he took two little lads to help him. Seeing how things were, I lent him some money, and since then from year to year the fortunes of the family have steadily improved. After the second year was over the two old mothers no longer molded bricks nor pounded stones; they looked after the little gardens, made the soup, mended the clothes, they did spinning in the evenings, and gathered firewood in the day-time; while the young wife, who can read and write, kept the accounts. Vigneau had a small horse, and rode on his business errands about the neighborhood; next he thoroughly studied the art of brick- and tile-making, discovered how to make excellent square white paving-tiles, and sold them for less than the usual prices. In the third year he had a cart and a pair of horses, and at the same time his wife's appearance became almost elegant. Everything about his household improved with the improvement in his business, and everywhere there were the same neatness, method, and thrift that had been the making of his little fortune.

"At last he had work enough for six men, to whom he pays good wages; he employs a wagoner, and everything about him wears an air of prosperity. Little by little, in short, by dint of taking pains and extending his business, his income has increased. He bought the tile-works last year, and next year he will rebuild his house. To-day all the worthy folk there are well clothed and in good health. His wife, who used to be so thin and pale when the burden of her husband's cares and anxieties used to press so hardly upon her, has recovered her good looks, and has grown quite young and pretty again. The two old mothers are thoroughly happy, and take the deepest interest in every detail of the housekeeping or of the business. Work has brought money, and the money that brought freedom from care brought health and plenty and happiness. The story of this household is a living history in miniature of the commune since I have known it, and of all young industrial states. The tile factory that used to look so empty, melancholy, ill-kept, and useless, is now in full work, astir with life, and well stocked with everything required. There is a good stock of wood here, and all the raw material for the

season's work: for, as you know, tiles can only be made during a few months in the year, between June and September. Is it not a pleasure to see all this activity? My tile-maker has done his share of the work in every building in the place. He is always wide awake, always coming and going, always busy—"the devourer," they call him in these parts."

Benassis had scarcely finished speaking when the wicket gate which gave entrance to the garden opened, and a nicely dressed young woman appeared. She came forward as quickly as her condition allowed, though the two horsemen hastened towards her. Her attire somewhat recalled her former quality of lady's-maid, for she wore a pretty cap, a pink dress, a silk apron, and white stockings. Mme. Vigneau, in short, was a nice-looking woman, sufficiently plump, and if she was somewhat sunburned, her natural complexion must have been very fair. There were a few lines still left in her forehead, traced there by the troubles of past days, but she had a bright and winsome face. She spoke in a persuasive voice, as she saw that the doctor came no further, "Will you not do me the honor of coming inside and resting for a moment, M. Benassis?"

"Certainly we will. Come this way, captain."

"The gentlemen must be very hot! Will you take a little milk or some wine? M. Benassis, please try a little of the wine that my husband has been so kind as to buy for my confinement. You will tell me if it is good."

"You have a good man for your husband."

"Yes, sir," she turned and spoke in quiet tones, "I am very well off."

"We will not take anything, Mme. Vigneau; I only came round this way to see that nothing troublesome had happened."

"Nothing," she said. "I was busy out in the garden, as you saw, turning the soil over for the sake of something to do."

Then the two old mothers came out to speak to Benassis, and the young wagoner planted himself in the middle of the

yard, in a spot from whence he could have a good view of the doctor.

"Let us see, let me have your hand," said Benassis, addressing Mme. Vigneau; and as he carefully felt her pulse, he stood in silence, absorbed in thought. The three women, meanwhile, scrutinized the commandant with the undisguised curiosity that country people do not scruple to express.

"Nothing could be better!" cried the doctor cheerily.

"Will she be confined soon?" both the mothers asked together.

"This week beyond a doubt. Is Vigneau away from home?" he asked, after a pause.

"Yes, sir," the young wife answered; "he is hurrying about settling his business affairs, so as to be able to stay at home during my confinement, the dear man!"

"Well, my children, go on and prosper; continue to increase your wealth and to add to your family."

The cleanliness of the almost ruinous dwelling filled Genestas with admiration.

Benassis saw the officer's astonishment, and said, "There is no one like Mme. Vigneau for keeping a house clean and tidy like this. I wish that several people in the town would come here to take a lesson."

The tile-maker's wife blushed and turned her head away; but the faces of the two old mothers beamed with pleasure at the doctor's words, and the three women walked with them to the spot where the horses were waiting.

"Well, now," the doctor said to the two old women, "here is happiness for you both! Were you not longing to be grandmothers?"

"Oh, do not talk about it," said the young wife; "they will drive me crazy among them. My two mothers wish for a boy, and my husband would like to have a little girl. It will be very difficult to please them all, I think."

"But you yourself," asked Benassis; "what is your wish?"

"Ah, sir, I wish for a child of my own."

"There! She is a mother already, you see," said the



doctor to the officer, as he laid his hand on the bridle of his horse.

“Good-by, M. Benassis; my husband will be sadly disappointed to learn that you have been here when he was not at home to see you.”

“He has not forgotten to send the thousand tiles to the Grange-aux-Belles for me?”

“You know quite well, sir, that he would keep all the orders in the canton waiting to serve you. Why, taking your money is the thing that troubles him most; but I always tell him that your crowns bring luck with them, and so they do.”

“Good-by,” said Benassis.

A little group gathered about the bars across the entrance to the tile-works. The three women, the young wagoner, and two workmen who had left off work to greet the doctor, lingered there to have the pleasure of being with him until the last moment, as we are wont to linger with those we love. The promptings of men’s hearts must everywhere be the same, and in every land friendship expresses itself in the same gracious ways.

Benassis looked at the height of the sun and spoke to his companion—

“There are still two hours of daylight left; and if you are not too hungry, we will go to see someone with whom I nearly always spend the interval between the last of my visits and the hour for dinner. She is a charming girl whom everyone here calls my ‘good friend.’ That is the name that they usually give to an affianced bride; but you must not imagine that there is the slightest imputation of any kind implied or intended by the use of the word in this case. Poor child, the care that I have taken of her has, as may be imagined, made her an object of jealousy, but the general opinion entertained as to my character has prevented any spiteful gossip. If no one understands the apparent caprice that has led me to make an allowance to La Fosseuse, so that she can live without being compelled to work, nobody has any doubts as to her character. I have watched over her with friendly care, and everyone knows that I should

never hesitate to marry her if my affection for her exceeded the limits of friendship. But no woman exists for me here in the canton or anywhere else," said the doctor, forcing a smile. "Some natures feel a tyrannous need to attach themselves to some one thing or being which they single out from among the beings and things around them; this need is felt most keenly by a man of quick sympathies, and all the more pressingly if his life has been made desolate. So, trust me, it is a favorable sign if a man is strongly attached to his dog or his horse! Among the suffering flock which chance has given into my care, this poor little sufferer has come to be for me like the pet lamb that the shepherd lasses deck with ribbons in my own sunny land of Languedoc; they talk to it and allow it to find pasture by the side of the cornfields, and its leisurely pace is never hurried by the shepherd's dog."

Benassis stood with his hand on his horse's mane as he spoke, ready to spring into the saddle, but making no effort to do so, as though the thoughts that stirred in him were but little in keeping with rapid movements.

"Let us go," he said at last; "come with me and pay her a visit. I am taking you to see her; does not that tell you that I treat her as a sister?"

As they rode on their way again, Genestas said to the doctor, "Will you regard it as inquisitiveness on my part if I ask to hear more of La Fosseuse? I have come to know the story of many lives through you, and hers cannot be less interesting than some of these."

Benassis stopped his horse as he answered. "Perhaps you will not share in the feelings of interest awakened in me by La Fosseuse. Her fate is like my own; we have both alike missed our vocation; it is the similarity of our lots that occasions my sympathy for her and the feelings that I experience at the sight of her. You either followed your natural bent when you entered upon a military career, or you took a liking for your calling after you had adopted it, otherwise you would not have borne the heavy yoke of military discipline till now; you, therefore, cannot understand the sorrows of a soul that must always feel renewed within it the stir of longings that can never be realized; nor the

pinning existence of a creature forced to live in an alien sphere. Such sufferings as these are known only to these natures and to God who sends their afflictions, for they alone can know how deeply the events of life affect them. You yourself have seen the miseries produced by long wars, till they have almost ceased to impress you, but have you never detected a trace of sadness in your mind at the sight of a tree bearing sere leaves in the midst of spring, some tree that is pining and dying because it has been planted in soil in which it could not find the sustenance required for its full development? Ever since my twentieth year, there has been something painful and melancholy for me about the drooping of a stunted plant, and now I cannot bear the sight and turn my head away. My youthful sorrow was a vague presentiment of the sorrows of my later life; it was a kind of sympathy between my present and a future dimly foreshadowed by the life of the tree that before its time was going the way of all trees and men."

"I thought that you had suffered when I saw how kind you were."

"You see, sir," the doctor went on without any reply to the remark made by Genestas, "that to speak of La Fosseuse is to speak of myself. La Fosseuse is a plant in an alien soil; a human plant moreover, consumed by sad thoughts that have their source in the depths of her nature, and that never cease to multiply. The poor girl is never well and strong. The soul within her kills the body. This fragile creature was suffering from the sorest of all troubles, a trouble which receives the least possible sympathy from our selfish world, and how could I look on with indifferent eyes? for I, a man, strong to wrestle with pain, was nightly tempted to refuse to bear the burden of a sorrow like hers. Perhaps I might actually have refused to bear it but for a thought of religion which soothes my impatience and fills my heart with sweet illusions. Even if we were not children of the same Father in Heaven, La Fosseuse would still be my sister in suffering!"

Benassis pressed his knees against his horse's sides, and swept ahead of Commandant Genestas, as if he shrank from

continuing this conversation any further. When their horses were once more cantering abreast of each other, he spoke again: "Nature has created this poor girl for sorrow," he said, "as she has created other women for joy. It is impossible to do otherwise than believe in a future life at the sight of natures thus predestined to suffer. La Fosseuse is sensitive and highly strung. If the weather is dark and cloudy, she is depressed; she 'weeps when the sky is weeping,' a phrase of her own: she sings with the birds; she grows happy and serene under a cloudless sky; the loveliness of a bright day passes into her face; a soft sweet perfume is an inexhaustible pleasure to her; I have seen her take delight the whole day long in the scent breathed forth by some mignonette; and, after one of those rainy mornings that bring out all the soul of the flowers and give indescribable freshness and brightness to the day, she seems to overflow with gladness like the green world around her. If it is close and hot, and there is thunder in the air, La Fosseuse feels a vague trouble that nothing can soothe. She lies on her bed, complains of numberless different ills, and does not know what ails her. In answer to my questions, she tells me that her bones are melting, that she is dissolving into water; her 'heart has left her,' to quote another of her sayings.

"I have sometimes come upon the poor child suddenly and found her in tears, as she gazed at the sunset effects we sometimes see here among our mountains, when bright masses of cloud gather and crowd together and pile themselves above the golden peaks of the hills. 'Why are you crying, little one?' I have asked her. 'I do not know, sir,' has been the answer; 'I have grown so stupid with looking up there; I have looked and looked, till I hardly know where I am.' 'But what do you see there?' 'I cannot tell you, sir,' and you might question her in this way all the evening, yet you would never draw a word from her; but she would look at you, and every glance would seem full of thoughts, or she would sit with tears in her eyes, scarcely saying a word, apparently rapt in musing. Those musings of hers are so profound that you fall under the spell of them; on

me, at least, she has the effect of a cloud overcharged with electricity. One day I plied her with questions; I tried with all my might to make her talk; at last I let fall a few rather hasty words; and, well—she burst into tears.

“At other times La Fosseuse is bright and winning, active, merry, and sprightly; she enjoys talking, and the ideas which she expresses are fresh and original. She is, however, quite unable to apply herself steadily to any kind of work. When she was out in the fields she used to spend whole hours in looking at a flower, in watching the water flow, in gazing at the wonders in the depths of the clear, still river pools, at the picturesque mosaic made up of pebbles and earth and sand, of water plants and green moss, and the brown soil washed down by the stream, a deposit full of soft shades of color, and of hues that contrast strangely with each other.

“When I first came to the district the poor girl was starving. It hurt her pride to accept the bread of others; and it was only when driven to the last extremity of want and suffering that she could bring herself to ask for charity. The feeling that this was a disgrace would often give her energy, and for several days she worked in the fields; but her strength was soon exhausted, and illness obliged her to leave the work that she had begun. She had scarcely recovered when she went to a farm on the outskirts of the town and asked to be taken on to look after the cattle; she did her work well and intelligently, but after a while she left without giving any reason for so doing. The constant toil, day after day, was no doubt too heavy a yoke for one who is all independence and caprice. Then she set herself to look for mushrooms or for truffles, going over to Grenoble to sell them. But the gaudy trifles in the town were very tempting, the few small coins in her hand seemed to be great riches; she would forget her poverty and buy ribbons and finery, without a thought for to-morrow’s bread. But if some other girl here in the town took a fancy to her brass crucifix, her agate heart, or her velvet ribbon, she would make them over to her at once, glad to give happiness, for she lives by generous impulses. So La Fosseuse was loved and pitied and despised by turns. Everything in her nature was a

cause of suffering to her—her indolence, her kindness of heart, her coquetry; for she is coquettish, dainty, and inquisitive, in short, she is a woman; she is as simple as a child, and, like a child, she is carried away by her tastes and her impressions. If you tell her about some noble deed, she trembles, her color rises, her heart throbs fast, and she sheds tears of joy; if you begin a story about robbers, she turns pale with terror. You could not find a more sincere, open-hearted, and scrupulously loyal nature anywhere; if you were to give a hundred gold pieces into her keeping, she would bury them in some out-of-the-way nook and beg her bread as before.’

There was a change in Benassis’s tone as he uttered these last words.

“I once determined to put her to the proof,” he said, “and I repented of it. It is like espionage to bring a test to bear upon another, is it not? It means that we suspect them at any rate.”

Here the doctor paused, as though some inward reflection engrossed him; he was quite unconscious of the embarrassment that his last remark had caused to his companion, who busied himself with disentangling the reins in order to hide his confusion. Benassis soon resumed his talk.

“I should like to find a husband for my Fosseuse. I should be glad to make over one of my farms to some good fellow who would make her happy. And she would be happy. The poor girl would love her children to distraction; for motherhood, which develops the whole of a woman’s nature, would give full scope to her overflowing sentiments. She has never cared for anyone, however. Yet her impressionable nature is a danger to her. She knows this herself, and when she saw that I recognized it, she admitted the excitability of her temperament to me. She belongs to the small minority of women whom the slightest contact with others causes to vibrate perilously; so that she must be made to value herself on her discretion and her womanly pride. She is as wild and shy as a swallow! Ah! what a wealth of kindness there is in her! Nature meant her to be a rich woman; she would be so beneficent: for a well-loved woman;

she would be so faithful and true. She is only twenty-two years old, and is sinking already beneath the weight of her soul; a victim to highly strung nerves, to an organization either too delicate or too full of power. A passionate love for a faithless lover would drive her mad, my poor Fosseuse! I have made a study of her temperament, recognized the reality of her prolonged nervous attacks, and of the swift mysterious recurrence of her uplifted moods. I found that they were immediately dependent on atmospheric changes and on the variations of the moon, a fact which I have carefully verified; and since then I have cared for her, as a creature unlike all others, for she is a being whose ailing existence I alone can understand. As I have told you, she is the pet lamb. But you shall see her; this is her cottage."

They had come about one-third of the way up the mountain side. Low bushes grew on either hand along the steep paths which they were ascending at a foot pace. At last, at a turn in one of the paths, Genestas saw La Fosseuse's dwelling, which stood on one of the largest knolls on the mountain. Around it was a green sloping space of lawn about three acres in extent, planted with trees, and surrounded by a wall high enough to serve as a fence, but not so high as to shut out the view of the landscape. Several rivulets that had their source in this garden formed little cascades among the trees. The brick-built cottage with a low roof that projected several feet was a charming detail in the landscape. It consisted of a ground floor and a single story, and stood facing the south. All the windows were in the front of the house, for its small size and lack of depth from back to front made other openings unnecessary. The doors and shutters were painted green, and the underside of the penthouses had been lined with deal boards in the German fashion, and painted white. The rustic charm of the whole little dwelling lay in its spotless cleanliness.

Climbing plants and briar roses grew about the house; a great walnut tree had been allowed to remain among the flowering acacias and trees that bore sweet-scented blossoms, and a few weeping willows had been set by the little streams in the garden space. A thick belt of pines and beeches

grew behind the house, so that the picturesque little dwelling was brought out into strong relief by the somber width of background. At that hour of the day, the air was fragrant with the scents from the hillsides and the perfume from La Fosseuse's garden. The sky overhead was clear and serene, but low clouds hung on the horizon, and the far-off peaks had begun to take the deep rose hues that the sunset often brings. At the height which they had reached the whole valley lay before their eyes, from distant Grenoble to the little lake at the foot of the circle of crags by which Genestas had passed on the previous day. Some little distance above the house a line of poplars on the hill indicated the highway that led to Grenoble. Rays of sunlight fell slantwise across the little town, which glittered like a diamond, for the soft red light which poured over it like a flood was reflected by all its window-panes. Genestas reined in his horse at the sight, and pointed to the dwellings in the valley, to the new town, and to La Fosseuse's house.

"Since the victory of Wagram, and Napoleon's return to the Tuileries in 1815," he said, with a sigh, "nothing has so stirred me as the sight of all this. I owe this pleasure to you, sir, for you have taught me to see beauty in a landscape."

"Yes," said the doctor, smiling as he spoke, "it is better to build towns than to storm them."

"Oh! sir, how about the taking of Moscow and the surrender of Mantua! Why, you do not really know what that means! Is it not a glory for all of us? You are a good man, but Napoleon also was a good man. If it had not been for England, you both would have understood each other, and our Emperor would never have fallen. There are no spies here," said the officer, looking around him, "and I can say openly that I love him, now that he is dead! What a ruler! He knew every man when he saw him! He would have made you a Councilor of State, for he was a great administrator himself; even to the point of knowing how many cartridges were left in the men's boxes after an action. Poor man! While you were talking about La Fosseuse, I thought of him, and how he was lying dead in St. Helena!



Was that the kind of climate and country to suit *him*, whose seat had been a throne, and who had lived with his feet in the stirrups; *hein?* They say that he used to work in the garden. The deuce! He was not made to plant cabbages. . . . And now we must serve the Bourbons, and loyally, sir; for, after all, France is France, as you were saying yesterday."

Genestas dismounted as he uttered these last words, and mechanically followed the example set by Benassis, who fastened his horse's bridle to a tree.

"Can she be away?" said the doctor, when he did not see La Fosseuse on the threshold. They went into the house, but there was no one in the sitting-room on the ground floor.

"She must have heard the sound of a second horse," said Benassis, with a smile, "and has gone upstairs to put on her cap, or her sash, or some piece of finery."

He left Genestas alone, and went upstairs in search of La Fosseuse. The commandant made a survey of the room. He noticed the pattern of the paper that covered the walls—roses scattered over a gray background, and the straw matting that did duty for a carpet on the floor. The arm-chair, the table, and the smaller chairs were made of wood from which the bark had not been removed. The room was not without ornament; some flower-stands, as they might be called, made of osiers and wooden hoops, had been filled with moss and flowers, and the windows were draped by white dimity curtains bordered with a scarlet fringe. There was a mirror above the chimney-piece, where a plain china jar stood between two candlesticks. Some calico lay on the table; shirts, apparently, had been cut out and begun, several pairs of gussets were finished, and a work-basket, scissors, needles, and thread, and all a needle-woman's requirements lay beside them. Everything was as fresh and clean as a shell that the sea has tossed up on the beach. Genestas saw that a kitchen lay on the other side of the passage, and that the staircase was at the farther end of it. The upper story, like the ground floor, evidently consisted of two rooms only. "Come, do not be frightened," Benassis was saying to La Fosseuse; "come downstairs!"

Genestas promptly retreated into the sitting-room when he heard these words, and in another moment a slender girl, well and gracefully made, appeared in the doorway. She wore a gown of cambric, covered with narrow pink stripes, and cut low at the throat, so as to display a muslin chemisette. Shyness and timidity had brought the color to a face which had nothing very remarkable about it save a certain flatness of feature which called to mind the Cossack and Russian countenances that since the disasters of 1814 have unfortunately come to be so widely known in France. La Fosseuse was, in fact, very like these men of the North. Her nose turned up at the end, and was sunk in her face, her mouth was wide and her chin small, her hands and arms were red and, like her feet, were of the peasant type, large and strong. Although she had been used to an outdoor life, to exposure to the sun and the scorching summer winds, her complexion had the bleached look of withered grass; but after the first glance this made her face more interesting, and there was such a sweet expression in her blue eyes, so much grace about her movements, and such music in her voice, that little as her features seemed to harmonize with the disposition which Benassis had praised to the commandant, the officer recognized in her the capricious and ailing creature, condemned to sufferings by a nature that had been thwarted in its growth.

La Fosseuse deftly stirred the fire of dry branches and turfs of peat, then sat down in an armchair and took up one of the shirts that she had begun. She sat there under the officer's eyes, half bashful, afraid to look up, and calm to all appearance; but her bodice rose and fell with the rapid breathing that betrayed her nervousness, and it struck Genestas that her figure was very graceful.

"Well, my poor child, is your work going on nicely?" said Benassis, taking up the material intended for the shirts, and passing it through his fingers.

La Fosseuse gave the doctor a timid and beseeching glance.

"Do not scold me, sir," she entreated; "I have not touched them to-day, although they were ordered by you, and for people who need them very badly. But the weather

has been so fine! I wandered out and picked a quantity of mushrooms and white truffles, and took them over to Jacquotte; she was very much pleased, for some people are coming to dinner. I was so glad that I thought of it; something seemed to tell me to go to look for them."

She began to ply her needle again.

"You have a very pretty house here, mademoiselle," said Genestas, addressing her.

"It is not mine at all, sir," she said, looking at the stranger, and her eyes seemed to grow red and tearful; "it belongs to M. Benassis," and she turned towards the doctor with a gentle expression on her face.

"You know quite well, my child, that you will never have to leave it," he said, as he took her hand in his.

La Fosseuse suddenly rose and left the room.

"Well," said the doctor, addressing the officer, "what do you think of her?"

"There is something strangely touching about her," Genestas answered. "How very nicely you have fitted up this little nest of hers!"

"Bah! a wallpaper at fifteen or twenty sous; it was carefully chosen, but that was all. The furniture is nothing very much either, my basket-maker made it for me; he wanted to show his gratitude; and La Fosseuse made the curtains herself out of a few yards of calico. This little house of hers, and her simple furniture, seem pretty to you, because you come upon them up here on a hillside in a forlorn part of the world where you did not expect to find things clean and tidy. The reason of the prettiness is a kind of harmony between the little house and its surroundings. Nature has set picturesque groups of trees and running streams about it, and has scattered her fairest flowers among the grass, her sweet-scented wild strawberry blossoms, and her lovely violets. . . . Well, what is the matter?" asked Benassis, as La Fosseuse came back to them.

"Oh! nothing, nothing," she answered. "I fancied that one of my chickens was missing, and had not been shut up."

Her remark was disingenuous, but this was only noticed by the doctor, who said in her ear, "You have been crying."

"Why do you say things like that to me before someone else?" she asked in reply.

"Mademoiselle," said Genestas, "it is a great pity that you live here all by yourself; you ought to have a mate in such a charming cage as this."

"That is true," she said, "but what would you have? I am poor, and I am hard to please. I feel that it would not suit me at all to carry the soup out into the fields, nor to push a hand-cart; to feel the misery of those whom I should love, and have no power to put an end to it; to carry my children in my arms all day, and patch and repatch a man's rags. The curé tells me that such thoughts as these are not very Christian; I know that myself, but how can I help it? There are days when I would rather eat a morsel of dry bread than cook anything for my dinner. Why would you have me worry some man's life out with my failings? He would perhaps work himself to death to satisfy my whims, and that would not be right. Pshaw! an unlucky lot has fallen to me, and I ought to bear it by myself."

"And besides, she is a born do-nothing," said Benassis. "We must take my poor Fosseuse as we find her. But all that she has been saying to you simply means that she has never loved as yet," he added, smiling. Then he rose and went out on to the lawn for a moment.

"You must be very fond of M. Benassis?" asked Genestas.

"Oh! yes, sir; and there are plenty of people hereabouts who feel as I do—that they would be glad to do anything in the world for him. And yet he who cures other people has some trouble of his own that nothing can cure. You are his friend, perhaps you know what it is? Who could have given pain to such a man, who is the very image of God on earth? I know a great many here who think that the corn grows faster if he has passed by their field in the morning."

"And what do you think yourself?"

"I, sir? When I have seen him," she seemed to hesitate, then she went on, "I am happy all the rest of the day."

She bent her head over her work, and plied her needle with unwonted swiftness.

"Well, has the captain been telling you something about Napoleon?" said the doctor, as he came in again.

"Have you seen the Emperor, sir?" cried La Fosseuse, gazing at the officer's face with eager curiosity.

"*Parbleu!*" said Genestas, "hundreds of times!"

"Oh! how I should like to know something about the army!"

"Perhaps we will come to take a cup of coffee with you to-morrow, and you shall hear 'something about the army,' dear child," said Benassis, who laid his hand on her shoulder and kissed her brow. "She is my daughter, you see!" he added, turning to the commandant; "there is something wanting in the day, somehow, when I have not kissed her forehead."

La Fosseuse held Benassis's hand in a tight clasp as she murmured, "Oh! you are very kind!"

They left the house; but she came after them to see them mount. She waited till Genestas was in the saddle, and then whispered in Benassis's ear, "Tell me who that gentleman is."

"Aha!" said the doctor, putting a foot in the stirrup, "a husband for you, perhaps."

She stood on the spot where they left her, absorbed in watching their progress down the steep path; and when they came past the end of the garden, they saw her already perched on a little heap of stones, so that she might still keep them in view and give them a last nod of farewell.

"There is something very unusual about that girl, sir," Genestas said to the doctor when they had left the house far behind.

"There is, is there not?" he answered. "Many a time I have said to myself that she will make a charming wife, but I can only love her as a sister or a daughter, and in no other way; my heart is dead."

"Has she any relations?" asked Genestas. "What did her father and mother do?"

"Oh, it is quite a long story," answered Benassis. "Neither her father nor mother nor any of her relations

are living. Everything about her down to her name interested me. La Fosseuse was born here in the town. Her father, a laborer from Saint-Laurent du Pont, was nicknamed *Le Fosseur*, which is no doubt a contraction of *fossoyeur*, for the office of sexton had been in his family time out of mind. All the sad associations of the graveyard hang about the name. Here, as in some other parts of France, there is an old custom, dating from the times of the Latin civilization, in virtue of which a woman takes her husband's name, with the addition of a feminine termination, and this girl has been called La Fosseuse, after her father.

"The laborer had married the waiting-woman of some countess or other who owns an estate at a distance of a few leagues. It was a love-match. Here, as in all country districts, love is a very small element in a marriage. The peasant, as a rule, wants a wife who will bear him children, a housewife who will make good soup and take it out to him in the fields, who will spin and make his shirts and mend his clothes. Such a thing had not happened for a long while in a district where a young man not unfrequently leaves his betrothed for another girl who is richer by three or four acres of land. The fate of Le Fosseur and his wife was scarcely happy enough to induce our Dauphinois to forsake their calculating habits and practical way of regarding things. La Fosseuse, who was a very pretty woman, died when her daughter was born, and her husband's grief for his loss was so great that he followed her within the year, leaving nothing in the world to his little one except an existence whose continuance was very doubtful—a mere feeble flicker of a life. A charitable neighbor took the care of the baby upon herself, and brought her up till she was nine years old. Then the burden of supporting La Fosseuse became too heavy for the good woman; so at the time of year when travelers are passing along the roads, she sent her charge to beg for her living upon the highways.

"One day the little orphan asked for bread at the countess's château, and they kept the child for her mother's sake. She was to be waiting-maid some day to the daughter of the house, and was brought up to this end. Her young mistress

was married five years later; but meanwhile the poor little thing was the victim of all the caprices of wealthy people, whose beneficence for the most part is not to be depended upon even while it lasts. They are generous by fits and starts; sometimes patrons, sometimes friends, sometimes masters, in this way they falsify the already false position of the poor children in whom they interest themselves, and trifle with the hearts, the lives, and futures of their protégées, whom they regard very lightly. From the first La Fosseuse became almost a companion to the young heiress; she was taught to read and write, and her future mistress sometimes amused herself by giving her music lessons. She was treated sometimes as a lady's companion, sometimes as a waiting-maid, and in this way they made an incomplete being of her. She acquired a taste for luxury and for dress, together with manners ill-suited to her real position. She has been roughly schooled by misfortune since then, but the vague feeling that she is destined for a higher lot has not been effaced in her.

"A day came at last, however, a fateful day for the poor girl, when the young countess (who was married by this time) discovered La Fosseuse arrayed in one of her ball dresses, and dancing before a mirror. La Fosseuse was no longer anything but a waiting-maid, and the orphan girl, then sixteen years of age, was dismissed without pity. Her idle ways plunged her once more into poverty; she wandered about begging by the roadside, and working at times as I have told you. Sometimes she thought of drowning herself, sometimes also of giving herself to the first comer; she spent most of her time thinking dark thoughts, lying by the side of a wall in the sun, with her face buried in the grass, and passers-by would sometimes throw a few halfpence to her, simply because she asked them for nothing. One whole year she spent in a hospital at Annecy after heavy toil in the harvest field; she had only undertaken the work in the hope that it would kill her, and that so she might die. You should hear her herself when she speaks of her feelings and ideas during this time of her life; her simple confidences are often very curious.

"She came back to the little town at last, just about the time when I decided to take up my abode in it. I wanted to understand the minds of the people beneath my rule; her character struck me, and I made a study of it; then when I became aware of her physical infirmities, I determined to watch over her. Perhaps in time she may grow accustomed to work with her needle, but, whatever happens, I have secured her future."

"She is quite alone up there!" said Genestas.

"No. One of my herdswomen sleeps in the house," the doctor answered. "You did not see my farm buildings which lie behind the house. They are hidden by the pine-trees. Oh! she is quite safe. Moreover, there are no *mauvais sujets* here in the valley; if any come among us by any chance, I send them into the army, where they make excellent soldiers."

"Poor girl!" said Genestas.

"Oh! the folk round about do not pity her at all," said Benassis; "on the other hand, they think her very lucky; but there is this difference between her and the other women, God has given strength to them and weakness to her, and they do not see that."

The moment that the two horsemen came out upon the road to Grenoble, Benassis stopped with an air of satisfaction; a different view had suddenly opened out before them; he foresaw its effect upon Genestas, and wished to enjoy his surprise. As far as the eye could see, two green walls sixty feet high rose above a road which was rounded like a garden path. The trees had not been cut or trimmed, each one preserved the magnificent palm-branch shape that makes the Lombard poplar one of the grandest of trees; there they stood, a natural monument which a man might well be proud of having reared. The shadow had already reached one side of the road, transforming it into a vast wall of black leaves, but the setting sun shone full upon the other side, which stood out in contrast, for the young leaves at the tips of every branch had been dyed a bright golden hue, and, as the breeze stirred through the waving curtain, it gleamed in the light.



"You must be very happy here!" cried Genestas. "The sight of this must be all pleasure to you."

"The love of nature is the only love that does not deceive human hopes. There is no disappointment here," said the doctor. "Those poplars are ten years old; have you ever seen any that are better grown than these of mine?"

"God is great!" said the soldier, coming to a stand in the middle of the road, of which he saw neither beginning nor end.

"You do me good," cried Benassis. "It was a pleasure to hear you say over again what I have so often said in the midst of this avenue. There is something holy about this place. Here, we are like two mere specks; and the feeling of our own littleness always brings us into the presence of God."

They rode on slowly and in silence, listening to their horses' hoof-beats; the sound echoed along the green corridor as it might have done beneath the vaulted roof of a cathedral.

"How many things have a power to stir us which town-dwellers do not suspect," said the doctor. "Do you notice the sweet scent given off by the gum of the poplar buds, and the resin of the larches? How delightful it is!"

"Listen!" exclaimed Genestas. "Let us wait a moment."

A distant sound of singing came to their ears.

"Is it a woman or a man, or is it a bird?" asked the commandant in a low voice. "Is it the voice of this wonderful landscape?"

"It is something of all these things," the doctor answered, as he dismounted and fastened his horse to a branch of a poplar tree.

He made a sign to the officer to follow his example and to come with him. They went slowly along a foot-path between two hedges of blossoming hawthorn which filled the damp evening air with its delicate fragrance. The sun shone full into the pathway; the light and warmth were very perceptible after the shade thrown by the long wall of poplar trees; the still powerful rays poured a flood of red light over a cottage at the end of the stony track. The

ridge of the cottage roof was usually a bright green with its overgrowth of mosses and house-leeks, and the thatch was brown as a chestnut shell, but just now it seemed to be powdered with a golden dust. The cottage itself was scarcely visible through the haze of light; the ruinous wall, the doorway, and everything about it were radiant with a fleeting glory and a beauty due to chance, such as is sometimes seen for an instant in a human face, beneath the influence of a strong emotion that brings warmth and color into it. In a life under the open sky and among the fields, the transient and tender grace of such moments as these draws from us the wish of the apostle who said to Jesus Christ upon the mountain, "Let us build a tabernacle and dwell here."

The wide landscape seemed at that moment to have found a voice whose purity and sweetness equaled its own sweetness and purity, a voice as mournful as the dying light in the west—for a vague reminder of Death is divinely set in the heavens, and the sun above gives the same warning that is given here on earth by the flowers and the bright insects of a day. There is a tinge of sadness about the radiance of sunset, and the melody was sad. It was a song widely known in days of yore, a ballad of love and sorrow that once had served to stir the national hatred of France for England. Beaumarchais, in a later day, had given it back its true poetry by adapting it for the French theater and putting it into the mouth of a page, who pours out his heart to his stepmother. Just now it was simply the air that rose and fell. There were no words; the plaintive voice of the singer touched and thrilled the soul.

"It is the swan's song," said Benassis. "That voice does not sound twice in a century for human ears. Let us hurry; we must put a stop to the singing! The child is killing himself; it would be cruel to listen to him any longer. Be quiet, Jacques! Come, come, be quiet!" cried the doctor.

The music ceased. Genestas stood motionless and overcame with astonishment. A cloud had drifted across the sun, the landscape and the voice were both mute. Shadow, chillness, and silence had taken the place of the soft glory

of the light, the warm breath of the breeze, and the child's singing.

"What makes you disobey me?" asked Benassis. "I shall not bring you any more rice pudding nor snail broth! No more fresh dates and white bread for you! So you want to die and break your poor mother's heart, do you?"

Genestas came into a little yard, which was sufficiently clean and tidily kept, and saw before him a lad of fifteen, who looked as delicate as a woman. His hair was fair but scanty, and the color in his face was so bright that it seemed hardly natural. He rose up slowly from the bench where he was sitting, beneath a thick bush of jessamine and some blossoming lilacs that were running riot, so that he was almost hidden among the leaves.

"You know very well," said the doctor, "that I told you not to talk, not to expose yourself to the chilly evening air, and to go to bed as soon as the sun was set. What put it into your head to sing?"

"*Dame! M. Benassis*, it was so very warm out here, and it is so nice to feel warm! I am always cold. I felt so happy that without thinking I began to try over *Malbrouk s'en va-t-en guerre*, just for fun, and then I began to listen to myself because my voice was something like the sound of the flute your shepherd plays."

"Well, my poor Jacques, this must not happen again; do you hear? Let me have your hand," and the doctor felt his pulse.

The boy's eyes had their usual sweet expression, but just now they shone with a feverish light.

"It is just as I thought, you are covered with perspiration," said Benassis. "Your mother has not come in yet?"

"No, sir."

"Come! go indoors and get into bed."

The young invalid went back into the cottage, followed by Benassis and the officer.

"Just light a candle, Captain Bluteau," said the doctor, who was helping Jacques to take off his rough, tattered clothing.

When Genestas had struck a light, and the interior of the

room was visible, he was surprised by the extreme thinness of the child, who seemed to be little more than skin and bone. When the little peasant had been put to bed, Benassis tapped the lad's chest, and listened to the ominous sounds made in this way by his fingers; then, after some deliberation, he drew back the coverlet over Jacques, stepped back a few paces, folded his arms across his chest, and closely scrutinized his patient.

"How do you feel, my little man?"

"Quite comfortable, sir."

A table, with four spindle legs, stood in the room; the doctor drew it up to the bed, found a tumbler and a phial on the mantel-shelf, and composed a draught, by carefully measuring a few drops of brown liquid from the phial into some water, Genestas holding the light the while.

"Your mother is very late."

"She is coming, sir," said the child; "I can hear her footsteps on the path."

The doctor and the officer looked around them while they waited. At the foot of the bed there was a sort of mattress made of moss, on which, doubtless, the mother was wont to sleep in her clothes, for there were neither sheets nor coverlet. Genestas pointed out this bed to Benassis, who nodded slightly to show that he likewise had already admired this motherly devotion. There was a clatter of sabots in the yard, and the doctor went out.

"You will have to sit up with Jacques to-night, Mother Colas. If he tells you that his breathing is bad, you must let him drink some of the draught that I have poured into the tumbler on the table. Take care not to let him have more than two or three sips at a time; there ought to be enough in the tumbler to last him all through the night. Above all things, do not touch the phial, and change the child's clothing at once. He is perspiring heavily."

"I could not manage to wash his shirts to-day, sir; I had to take the hemp over to Grenoble, as we wanted the money."

"Very well, then, I will send you some shirts."

"Then is he worse, my poor lad?" asked the woman.

"He has been so imprudent as to sing, Mother Colas; and it is not to be expected that any good can come of it; but do not be hard upon him, nor scold him. Do not be down-hearted about it; and if Jacques complains overmuch, send a neighbor to fetch me. Good-by."

The doctor called to his friend, and they went back along the footpath.

"Is that little peasant consumptive?" asked Genestas.

"*Mon Dieu!* yes," answered Benassis. "Science cannot save him, unless Nature works a miracle. Our professors at the *École de Médecine* in Paris often used to speak to us of the phenomenon which you have just witnessed. Some maladies of this kind bring about changes in the voice-producing organs that give the sufferer a short-lived power of song that no trained voice can surpass. I have made you spend a melancholy day, sir," said the doctor when he was once more in the saddle. "Sufferings and death everywhere, but everywhere also resignation. All these peasant folk take death philosophically; they fall ill, say nothing about it, and take to their beds like dumb animals. But let us say no more about death, and let us quicken our horses' paces a little; we ought to reach the town before nightfall, so that you may see the new quarter."

"Eh! some place is on fire over there," said Genestas, pointing to a spot on the mountain, where a sheaf of flames was rising.

"It is not a dangerous fire. Our lime-burner is heating his kiln, no doubt. It is a newly started industry, which turns our heather to account."

There was a sudden report of a gun, followed by an involuntary exclamation from Benassis, who said, with an impatient gesture, "If that is Butifer, we shall see which of us two is the stronger."

"The shot came from that quarter," said Genestas, indicating a beech-wood up above them on the mountain side. "Yes, up there; you may trust an old soldier's ear."

"Let us go there at once!" cried Benassis, and he made straight for the little wood, urging his horse at a furious speed across the ditches and fields, as if he were riding a

steeple-chase, in his anxiety to catch the sportsman red-handed.

"The man you are after has made off," shouted Genestas, who could scarcely keep up with him.

Benassis wheeled his horse round sharply, and came back again. The man of whom he was in search soon appeared on the top of a perpendicular crag, a hundred feet above the level of the two horsemen.

"Butifer!" shouted Benassis when he saw that this figure carried a fowling-piece; "come down!"

Butifer recognized the doctor, and replied by a respectful and friendly sign which showed that he had every intention of obeying.

"I can imagine that if a man were driven to it by fear or by some overmastering impulse he might possibly contrive to scramble up to that point among the rocks," said Genestas; "but how will he manage to come down again?"

"I have no anxiety on that score," answered Benassis; "the wild goats must feel envious of that fellow yonder! You will see."

The emergencies of warfare had accustomed the commandant to gauge the real worth of men; he admired the wonderful quickness of Butifer's movements, the sure-footed grace with which the hunter swung himself down the rugged sides of the crag, to the top of which he had so boldly climbed. The strong, slender form of the mountaineer was gracefully poised in every attitude which the precipitous nature of the path compelled him to assume; and so certain did he seem of his power to hold on at need, that if the pinnacle of rock on which he took his stand had been a level floor, he could not have set his foot down upon it more calmly. He carried his fowling-piece as if it had been a light walking-cane. Butifer was a young man of middle height, thin, muscular, and in good training; his beauty was of a masculine order, which impressed Genestas on a closer view.

Evidently he belonged to the class of smugglers who ply their trade without resorting to violent courses, and who only exert patience and craft to defraud the Government.

His face was manly and sunburnt. His eyes, which were bright as an eagle's, were of a clear yellow color, and his sharply cut nose with its slight curve at the tip was very much like an eagle's beak. His cheeks were covered with down, his red lips were half open, giving a glimpse of a set of teeth of dazzling whiteness. His beard, mustache, and the reddish whiskers, which he allowed to grow, and which curled naturally, still further heightened the masculine and forbidding expression of his face. Everything about him spoke of strength. He was broad-chested; constant activity had made the muscles of his hands curiously firm and prominent. There was the quick intelligence of the savage about his glances; he looked resolute, fearless, and imperturbable, like a man accustomed to put his life in peril, and whose physical and mental strength had been so often tried by dangers of every kind, that he no longer felt any doubts about himself. He wore a blouse that had suffered a good deal from thorns and briars, and he had a pair of leather soles bound to his feet by eel-skin thongs, and a pair of torn and tattered blue linen breeches through which his legs were visible, red, wiry, hard, and muscular as those of a stag.

"There you see the man who once fired a shot at me," Benassis remarked to the commandant in a low voice. "If at this moment I were to signify to him my desire to be rid of anyone, he would kill him without scruple.—But-fer!" he went on, addressing the poacher, "I fully believed you to be a man of your word; I pledged mine for you because I had your promise. My promise to the *procureur du roi* at Grenoble was based upon your vow never to go poaching again, and to turn over a new leaf and become a steady, industrious worker. You fired that shot just now, and here you are, on the Comte de Labranchoir's estate! Eh! you miscreant? Suppose his keeper had happened to hear you? It is a lucky thing for you that I shall take no formal cognizance of this offense; if I did, you would come up as an old offender, and of course you have no gun license! I let you keep that gun of yours out of tenderness for your attachment to the weapon."

"It is a beauty," said the commandant, who recognized a duck gun from Saint Étienne.

The smuggler raised his head and looked at Genestas by way of acknowledging the compliment.

"Butifer," continued Benassis, "if your conscience does not reproach you, it ought to do so. If you are going to begin your old tricks again, you will find yourself once more in a park inclosed by four stone walls, and no power on earth will save you from the hulks; you will be a marked man, and your character will be ruined. Bring your gun to me to-night, I will take care of it for you."

Butifer gripped the barrel of his weapon in a convulsive clutch.

"You are quite right, sir," he said; "I have done wrong, I have broken bounds, I am a cur. My gun ought to go to you, but when you take it away from me, you take all that I have in the world. The last shot which my mother's son will fire shall be through my own head. . . . What would you have? I did as you wanted me. I kept quiet all the winter; but the spring came, and the sap rose. I am not used to day labor. It is not in my nature to spend my life in fattening fowls; I cannot stoop about turning over the soil for vegetables, nor flourish a whip and drive a cart, nor scrub down a horse in a stable all my life, so I must die of starvation, I suppose? I am only happy when I am up there," he went on after a pause, pointing to the mountains. "And I have been about among the hills for the past week; I got a sight of a chamois, and I have the chamois there," he said, pointing to the top of the crag; "it is at your service! Dear M. Benassis, leave me my gun. Listen! I will leave the commune, *foi de Butifer!* I will go to the Alps; the chamois-hunters will not say a word; on the contrary, they will receive me with open arms. I shall come to grief at the bottom of some glacier; but, if I am to speak my mind, I would rather live for a couple of years among the heights, where there are no governments, nor excisemen, nor gamekeepers, nor *procureurs du roi*, than grovel in a marsh for a century. You are the only one that I shall be sorry to leave behind; all the rest of them bore me!



When you are in the right, at any rate you don't worry one's life out——"

"And how about Louise?" asked Benassis. Butifer paused and turned thoughtful.

"Eh! learn to read and write, my lad," said Genestas; "come and enlist in my regiment, have a horse to ride, and turn carabineer. If they once sound 'to horse' for something like a war, you will find out that Providence made you to live in the midst of cannon, bullets, and battalions, and they will make a general of you."

"Ye-es, if Napoleon was back again," answered Butifer.

"You know our agreement," said the doctor. "At the second infraction of it, you undertook to go for a soldier. I give you six months in which to learn to read and write, and then I will find up some young gentleman who wants a substitute."

Butifer looked at the mountains.

"Oh! you shall not go to the Alps," cried Benassis. "A man like you, a man of his word, with plenty of good stuff in him, ought to serve his country and command a brigade, and not come to his end trailing after a chamois. The life that you are leading will take you straight to the convict's prison. After over-fatiguing yourself, you are obliged to take a long rest; and, in the end, you will fall into idle ways that will be the ruin of any notions of orderly existence that you have; you will get into the habit of putting your strength to bad uses, and you will take the law into your own hands. I want to put you, in spite of yourself, into the right path."

"So I am to pine and fret myself to death? I feel suffocating whenever I am in a town. I cannot hold out for more than a day, in Grenoble, when I take Louise there——"

"We all have our whims, which we must manage to control, or turn them to account for our neighbor's benefit. But it is late, and I am in a hurry. Come to see me tomorrow, and bring your gun along with you. We will talk this over, my boy. Good-by. Go and sell your chamois in Grenoble."

The two horsemen went on their way.

"That is what I call a man," said Genestas.

"A man in a bad way," answered Benassis. "But what help is there for it? You heard what he said. Is it not lamentable to see such fine qualities running to waste? If France were invaded by a foreign foe, Butifer at the head of a hundred young fellows would keep a whole division busy in Maurienne for a month; but in a time of peace the only outlets for his energy are those which set the law at defiance. He must wrestle with something; whenever he is not risking his neck he is at odds with society, he lends a helping hand to smugglers. The rogue will cross the Rhone, all by himself, in a little boat, to take shoes over into Savoy; he makes good his retreat, heavy laden as he is, to some inaccessible place high up among the hills, where he stays for two days at a time, living on dry crusts. In short, danger is as welcome to him as sleep would be to anybody else, and by dint of experience he has acquired a relish for extreme sensations that has totally unfitted him for ordinary life. It vexes me that a man like that should take a wrong turn and gradually go to the bad, become a bandit, and die on the gallows. But, see, captain, how our village looks from here!"

Genestas obtained a distant view of a wide circular space, planted with trees, a fountain surrounded by poplars stood in the middle of it. Round the inclosure were high banks on which a triple line of trees of different kinds were growing; the first row consisted of acacias, the second of Japanese varnish trees, and some young elms grew on the highest row of all.

"That is where we hold our fair," said Benassis. "That is the beginning of the High Street, by those two handsome houses that I told you about; one belongs to the notary, and the other to the justice of the peace."

They came at that moment into a broad road, fairly evenly paved with large cobble-stones. There were altogether about a hundred new houses on either side of it, and almost every house stood in a garden.

The view of the church with its doorway made a pretty

termination to this road. Two more roads had been recently planned out halfway down the course of the first, and many new houses had already been built along them. The town-hall stood opposite the parsonage, in the square by the church. As Benassis went down the road, women and children and men who had just finished their day's work promptly appeared in their doorways to wish him good-evening, the men took off their caps, and the little children danced and shouted about his horse, as if the animal's good-nature were as well known as the kindness of its master. The gladness was undemonstrative; there was the instinctive delicacy of all deep feeling about it, and it had the same pervasive power. At the sight of this welcome it seemed to Genestas that the doctor had been too modest in his description of the affection with which he was regarded by the people of the district. His truly was a sovereignty of the sweetest kind; a right royal sovereignty, moreover, for its title was engraven in the hearts of its subjects. However dazzling the rays of glory that surround a man, however great the power that he enjoys, in his inmost soul he soon comes to a just estimate of the sentiments that all external action causes for him. He very soon sees that no change has been wrought in him, that there is nothing new and nothing greater in the exercise of his physical faculties, and discovers his own real nothingness. Kings, even should they rule over the whole world, are condemned to live in a narrow circle like other men. They must even submit to the conditions of their lot, and their happiness depends upon the personal impressions that they receive. But Benassis met with nothing but good will and loyalty throughout the district.

### III

#### THE NAPOLEON OF THE PEOPLE

"PRAY, come in, sir!" cried Jacquotte. "A pretty time the gentlemen have been waiting for you! It is always the way! You always manage to spoil the dinner

for me whenever it ought to be particularly good. Everything is cooked to death by this time——”

“Oh well, here we are,” answered Benassis with a smile.

The two horsemen dismounted, and went off to the salon, where the guests invited by the doctor were assembled.

“Gentlemen,” he said, taking Genestas by the hand, “I have the honor of introducing to you M. Bluteau, captain of a regiment of cavalry stationed at Grenoble—an old soldier, who has promised me that he will stay among us for a little while.”

Then, turning to Genestas, he presented to him a tall, thin, gray-haired man, dressed in black.

“This gentleman,” said Benassis, “is M. Dufau, the justice of the peace of whom I have already spoken to you, and who has so largely contributed to the prosperity of the commune.” Then he led his guest up to a pale, slight young man of middle height, who wore spectacles, and was also dressed in black. “And this is M. Tonnelet,” he went on, “M. Gravier’s son-in-law, and the first notary who came to live in the village.”

The doctor next turned to a stout man, who seemed to belong half to the peasant, half to the middle class, the owner of a rough-pimpled but good-humored countenance.

“This is my worthy colleague, M. Cambon,” he went on, “the timber merchant, to whom I owe the confidence and good will of the people here. He was one of the promoters of the road which you have admired. I have no need to tell you the profession of this gentleman,” Benassis added, turning to the curé. “Here is a man whom no one can help loving.”

There was an irresistible attraction in the moral beauty expressed by the curé’s countenance, which engrossed Genestas’s attention. Yet a certain harshness and austerity of outline might make M. Janvier’s face seem unpleasing at a first glance. His attitude, and his slight, emaciated frame, showed that he was far from strong physically, but the unchanging serenity of his face bore witness to the profound inward peace of the Christian and to the strength that comes from purity of heart. Heaven seemed to be reflected in

his eyes, and the inextinguishable fervor of charity which glowed in his heart appeared to shine from them. The gestures that he made but rarely were simple and natural; his appeared to be a quiet and retiring nature, and there was a modesty and simplicity like that of a young girl about his actions. At first sight he inspired respect and a vague desire to be admitted to his friendship.

"Ah! M. le Maire," he said, bending as though to escape from Benassis's eulogium.

Something in the curé's tones brought a thrill to Genestas's heart, and the two insignificant words uttered by this stranger priest plunged him into musings that were almost devout.

"Gentlemen," said Jacquotte, who came into the middle of the room, and there took her stand, with her hands on her hips, "the soup is on the table."

Invited by Benassis, who summoned each in turn so as to avoid questions of precedence, the doctor's five guests went into the dining-room; and after the curé, in low and quiet tones, had repeated a *Benedicite*, they took their places at table. The cloth that covered the table was of that peculiar kind of damask linen invented in the time of Henri IV. by the brothers Graindorge, the skillful weavers, who gave their name to the heavy fabric so well known to housekeepers. The linen was of dazzling whiteness, and fragrant with the scent of the thyme that Jacquotte always put into her wash-tubs. The dinner service was of white porcelain, edged with blue, and was in perfect order. The decanters were of the old-fashioned octagonal kind still in use in the provinces, though they have disappeared elsewhere. Grotesque figures had been carved on the horn handles of the knives. These relics of ancient splendor, which, nevertheless, looked almost new, seemed to those who scrutinized them to be in keeping with the kindly and open-hearted nature of the master of the house.

The lid of the soup-tureen drew a momentary glance from Genestas; he noticed that it was surmounted by a group of vegetables in high relief, skillfully colored after the manner of Bernard Palissy, the celebrated sixteenth century craftsman.

There was no lack of character about the group of men thus assembled. The powerful heads of Genestas and Benassis contrasted admirably with M. Janvier's apostolic countenance; and in the same fashion the elderly faces of the justice of the peace and the deputy-mayor brought out the youthfulness of the notary. Society seemed to be represented by these various types. The expression of each one indicated contentment with himself and with the present, and a faith in the future. M. Tonnelet and M. Janvier, who were still young, loved to make forecasts of coming events, for they felt that the future was theirs; while the other guests were fain rather to turn their talk upon the past. All of them faced the things of life seriously, and their opinions seemed to reflect a double tinge of soberness, on the one hand, from the twilight hues of well-nigh forgotten joys that could never more be revived for them; and, on the other, from the gray dawn which gave promise of a glorious day.

"You must have had a very tiring day, sir?" said M. Cambon, addressing the curé.

"Yes, sir," answered M. Janvier, "the poor *crétin* and Père Pelletier were buried at different hours."

"Now we can pull down all the hovels of the old village," Benassis remarked to his deputy. "When the space on which the houses stand has been grubbed up, it will mean at least another acre of meadow land for us; and furthermore, there will be a clear saving to the commune of the hundred francs that it used to cost to keep Chautard the *crétin*."

"For the next three years we ought to lay out the hundred francs in making a single-span bridge to carry the lower road over the main stream," said M. Cambon. "The townsfolk and the people down the valley have fallen into the way of taking a short cut across that patch of land of Jean François Pastoureau's; before they have done they will cut it up in a way that will do a lot of harm to that poor fellow."

"I am sure that the money could not be put to a better use," said the justice of the peace. "In my opinion the

abuse of the right of way is one of the worst nuisances in a country district. One-tenth of the cases that come before the Court are caused by unfair easements. The rights of property are infringed in this way almost with impunity in many and many a commune. A respect for law and a respect for property are ideas too often disregarded in France, and it is most important that they should be inculcated. Many people think that there is something dishonorable in assisting the law to take its course. 'Go and be hanged somewhere else,' is a saying which seems to be dictated by an unpraiseworthy generosity of feeling; but at bottom it is nothing but a hypocritical formula—a sort of veil which we throw over our own selfishness. Let us own to it, we lack patriotism! The true patriot is the citizen who is so deeply impressed with a sense of the importance of the laws that he will see them carried out even at his own cost and inconvenience. If you let the criminal go in peace, are you not making yourself answerable for the crimes he will commit?"

"It is all of a piece," said Benassis. "If the mayors kept their roads in better order, there would not be so many footpaths. And if the members of Municipal Councils knew a little better, they would uphold the small landowner and the mayor when the two combine to oppose the establishment of unfair easements. The fact that château, cottage, field, and tree are all equally sacred would then be brought home in every way to the ignorant; they would be made to understand that Right is just the same in all cases, whether the value of the property in question be large or small. But such salutary changes cannot be brought about all at once. They depend almost entirely on the moral condition of the population, which we can never completely reform without the potent aid of the curés. This remark does not apply to you in any way, M. Janvier."

"Nor do I take it to myself," laughed the curé. "Is not my heart set on bringing the teaching of the Catholic religion to co-operate with your plans of administration? For instance, I have often tried, in my pulpit discourses on theft, to imbue the folk of this parish with the very ideas

of Right to which you have just given utterance. For truly, God does not estimate theft by the value of the thing stolen, He looks at the thief. That has been the gist of the parables which I have tried to adapt to the comprehension of my parishioners."

"You have succeeded, sir," said Cambon. "I know the change you have brought about in people's ways of looking at things, for I can compare the commune as it is now with the commune as it used to be. There are certainly very few places where the laborers are as careful as ours are about keeping to time in their working hours. The cattle are well looked after; any damage that they do is done by accident. There is no pilfering in the woods, and finally you have made our peasants clearly understand that the leisure of the rich is the reward of a thrifty and hard-working life."

"Well, then," said Genestas, "you ought to be pretty well pleased with your infantry, M. le Curé."

"We cannot expect to find angels anywhere here below, captain," answered the priest. "Wherever there is poverty, there is suffering too; and suffering and poverty are strong compelling forces which have their abuses, just as power has. When the peasants have a couple of leagues to walk to their work, and have to tramp back wearily in the evening, they perhaps see sportsmen taking short cuts over plowed land and pasture so as to be back to dinner a little sooner, and is it to be supposed that they will hesitate to follow the example? And of those who in this way beat out a foot-path such as these gentlemen have just been complaining about, which are the real offenders, the workers or the people who are simply amusing themselves? Both the rich and the poor give us a great deal of trouble in these days. Faith, like power, ought always to descend from the heights above us, in heaven or on earth; and certainly in our times the upper classes have less faith in them than the mass of the people, who have God's promise of heaven hereafter as a reward for evils patiently endured. With due submission to ecclesiastical discipline, and deference to the views of my superiors, I think that for some time to come we should be less exacting as to questions of doctrine, and rather en-



deavor to revive the sentiment of religion in the hearts of the intermediary classes, who debate over the maxims of Christianity instead of putting them in practice. The philosophism of the rich has set a fatal example to the poor, and has brought intervals of too long duration when men have faltered in their allegiance to God. Such ascendancy as we have over our flocks to-day depends entirely on our personal influence with them; is it not deplorable that the existence of religious belief in a commune should be dependent on the esteem in which a single man is held? When the preservative force of Christianity permeating all classes of society shall have put life into the new order of things, there will be an end of sterile disputes about doctrine. The cult of a religion is its form; societies only exist by forms. You have your standard, we have the cross——”

“I should very much like to know, sir,” said Genestas, breaking in upon M. Janvier, “why you forbid these poor folk to dance on Sunday?”

“We do not quarrel with dancing in itself, captain; it is forbidden because it leads to immorality, which troubles the peace of the countryside and corrupts its manners. Does not the attempt to purify the spirit of the family and to maintain the sanctity of family ties strike at the root of the evil?”

“Some irregularities are always to be found in every district I know,” said M. Tonnelet, “but they very seldom occur among us. Perhaps there are peasants who remove their neighbor’s landmark without much scruple; or they may cut a few osiers that belong to someone else, if they happen to want some; but these are mere peccadilloes compared with the wrongdoing that goes on among a town population. Moreover, the people in this valley seem to me to be devoutly religious.”

“Devout?” queried the curé with a smile; “there is no fear of fanaticism here.”

“But,” objected Cambon, “if the people all went to Mass every morning, sir, and to confession every week, how would the fields be cultivated? And three priests would hardly be enough.”

"Work is prayer," said the curé. "Doing one's duty brings a knowledge of the religious principles which are a vital necessity to society."

"How about patriotism?" asked Genestas.

"Patriotism can only inspire a short-lived enthusiasm," the curé answered gravely; "religion gives it permanence. Patriotism consists in a brief impulse of forgetfulness of self and self-interest, while Christianity is a complete system of opposition to the depraved tendencies of mankind."

"And yet, during the wars undertaken by the Revolution, patriotism——"

"Yes, we worked wonders at the time of the Revolution," said Benassis, interrupting Genestas; "but only twenty years later, in 1814, our patriotism was extinct; while, in former times, a religious impulse moved France and Europe to fling themselves upon Asia a dozen times in the course of a century."

"Maybe it is easier for two nations to come to terms when the strife has arisen out of some question of material interests," said the justice of the peace; "while wars undertaken with the idea of supporting dogmas are bound to be interminable, because the object can never be clearly defined."

"Well, sir, you are not helping anyone to fish!" put in Jacquotte, who had removed the soup with Nicolle's assistance. Faithful to her custom, Jacquotte herself always brought in every dish one after another, a plan which had its drawbacks, for it compelled gluttonous folk to overeat themselves, and the more abstemious, having satisfied their hunger at an early stage, were obliged to leave the best part of the dinner untouched.

"Gentlemen," said the curé, with a glance at the justice of the peace, "how can you allege that religious wars have had no definite aim? Religion in olden times was such a powerful binding force, that material interests and religious questions were inseparable. Every soldier, therefore, knew quite well what he was fighting for."

"If there has been so much fighting about religion," said Genestas, "God must have built up the system very per-

functorily. Should not a divine institution impress men at once by the truth that is in it?"

All the guests looked at the curé.

"Gentlemen," said M. Janvier, "religion is something that is felt and that cannot be defined. We cannot know the purpose of the Almighty; we are no judges of the means He employs."

"Then, according to you, we are to believe in all your rignaroles," said Genestas, with the easy good humor of a soldier who has never given a thought to these things.

"The Catholic religion, better than any other, resolves men's doubts and fears; but even were it otherwise, I might ask you if you run any risks by believing in its truths."

"None worth speaking of," answered Genestas.

"Good! and what risks do you not run by not believing? But let us talk of the worldly aspect of the matter, which most appeals to you. The finger of God is visible in human affairs; see how He directs them by the hand of His vicar on earth. How much men have lost by leaving the path traced out for them by Christianity! So few think of reading Church history, that erroneous notions deliberately sown among the people lead them to condemn the Church; yet the Church has been a pattern of perfect government such as men seek to establish to-day. The principle of election made it for a long while a great political power. Except the Catholic Church, there was no single religious institution which was founded upon liberty and equality. Everything was ordered to this end. The father-superior, the abbot, the bishop, the general of an order, and the Pope were then chosen conscientiously for their fitness for the requirements of the Church. They were the expression of its intelligence, of the thinking power of the Church, and blind obedience was therefore their due. I will say nothing of the ways in which society has benefited by that power which has created modern nations and has inspired so many poems, so much music, so many cathedrals, statues, and pictures. I will simply call your attention to the fact that your modern systems of popular election, of two chambers, and of juries, all had their origin in the provincial and ecu-

menical councils, and in the episcopate and the college of cardinals; but there is this difference,—the views of civilization held by our present-day philosophy seem to me to fade away before the sublime and divine conception of Catholic communion, the type of a universal social communion brought about by the word and the fact that are combined in religious dogma. It would be very difficult for any modern political system, however perfect people may think it, to work once more such miracles as were wrought in those ages when the Church was the stay and support of the human intellect.”

“Why?” asked Genestas.

“Because, in the first place, if the principle of election is to be the basis of a system, absolute equality among the electors is a first requirement; they ought to be ‘equal quantities,’ to make use of a mathematical term, and that is a state of things which modern politics will never bring about. Then, great social changes can only be effected by means of some common sentiment so powerful that it brings men into concerted action, while latter-day philosophism has discovered that law is based upon personal interest, which keeps men apart. Men full of the generous spirit that watches with tender care over the trampled rights of the suffering poor, were more often found among the nations of past ages than in our generation. The priesthood, also, which sprang from the middle classes, resisted material forces and stood between the people and their enemies. But the territorial possessions of the Church and her temporal power, which seemingly made her position yet stronger, ended by crippling and weakening her action. As a matter of fact, if the priest has possessions and privileges, he at once appears in the light of an oppressor. He is paid by the State, therefore he is an official: if he gives his time, his life, his whole heart, this is a matter of course, and nothing more than he ought to do; the citizens expect and demand his devotion; and the spontaneous kindness of his nature is dried up. But, let the priest be vowed to poverty, let him turn to his calling of his own free will, let him stay himself on God alone, and have no resource on earth but the hearts of the faithful, and he becomes once more the missionary of

America, he takes the rank of an apostle, he has all things under his feet. Indeed, the burden of wealth drags him down, and it is only by renouncing everything that he gains dominion over all men's hearts."

M. Janvier had compelled the attention of everyone present. No one spoke; for all the guests were thoughtful. It was something new to hear such words as these in the mouth of a simple curé.

"There is one serious error, M. Janvier, among the truths to which you have given expression," said Benassis. "As you know, I do not like to raise discussions on points of general interest which modern authorities and modern writers have called in question. In my opinion, a man who has thought out a political system, and who is conscious that he has within him the power of applying it in practical politics, should keep his mind to himself, seize his opportunity and act; but if he dwells in peaceful obscurity as a simple citizen, is it not sheer lunacy to think to bring the great mass over to his opinion by means of individual discussions? For all that, I am about to argue with you, my dear pastor, for I am speaking before sensible men, each of whom is accustomed always to bring his individual light to a common search for the truth. My ideas may seem strange to you, but they are the outcome of much thought caused by the calamities of the last forty years. Universal suffrage, which finds such favor in the sight of those persons who belong to the constitutional opposition, as it is called, was a capital institution in the Church, because (as you yourself have just pointed out, dear pastor) the individuals of whom the Church was composed were all well educated, disciplined by religious feeling, thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the same system, well aware of what they wanted and whither they were going. But modern Liberalism rashly made war upon the prosperous Government of the Bourbons, by means of ideas which, should they triumph, would be the ruin of France and of the Liberals themselves. This is well known to the leaders of the Left, who are merely endeavoring to get the power into their own hands. If (which Heaven forbid) the middle classes ranged under the banner of the

opposition should succeed in overthrowing those social superiorities which are so repugnant to their vanity, another struggle would follow hard upon their victory. It would not be very long before the middle classes in their turn would be looked upon by the people as a sort of noblesse; they would be a sorry kind of noblesse, it is true, but their wealth and privileges would seem so much the more hateful in the eyes of the people because they would have a closer vision of these things. I do not say that the nation would come to grief in this struggle, but society would perish anew; for the day of triumph of a suffering people is always brief, and involves disorders of the worst kind. There would be no truce in a desperate strife arising out of an inherent or acquired difference of opinion among the electors. The less enlightened and more numerous portion would sweep away social inequalities, thanks to a system in which votes are reckoned by count and not by weight. Hence it follows that a government is never more strongly organized, and, as a consequence, is never more perfect than when it has been established for the protection of Privilege of the most restricted kind. By Privilege I do not at this moment mean the old abuses by which certain rights were conceded to a few, to the prejudice of the many; no, I am using it to express the social circle of the governing class. The governing class is in some sort the heart of the State. But throughout creation nature has confined the vital principle within a narrow space, in order to concentrate its power; and so it is with the body politic. I will illustrate this thought of mine by examples. Let us suppose that there are a hundred peers in France, there are only one hundred causes of offense. Abolish the peerage, and all wealthy people will constitute the privileged class; instead of a hundred, you will have ten thousand, instead of removing class distinctions, you have merely widened the mischief. In fact, from the people's point of view, the right to live without working is in itself a privilege. The unproductive consumer is a robber in their eyes. The only work that they understand has palpable results; they set no value on intellectual labor—the kind of labor which is the principal

source of wealth to them. So by multiplying causes of offense in this way, you extend the field of battle; the social war would be waged on all points instead of being confined within a limited circle; and when attack and resistance become general, the ruin of a country is imminent. Because the rich will always be fewer in number, the victory will be to the poor as soon as it comes to actual fighting. I will throw the burden of proof on history.

“The institution of Senatorial Privilege enabled the Roman Republic to conquer the world. The Senate preserved the tradition of authority. But when the *equites* and the *novi homines* had extended the governing class by adding to the numbers of the Patricians, the State came to ruin. In spite of Sylla, and after the time of Julius Cæsar, Tiberius raised it into the Roman Empire; the system was embodied in one man, and all authority was centered in him, a measure which prolonged the magnificent sway of the Roman for several centuries. The Emperor had ceased to dwell in Rome when the Eternal City fell into the hands of barbarians. When the conqueror invaded our country, the Franks who divided the land among themselves invented feudal privilege as a safeguard for property. The hundred or the thousand chiefs who owned the country, established their institutions with a view to defending the rights gained by conquest. The duration of the feudal system was coexistent with the restriction of Privilege. But when the *leudes* (an exact translation of the word *gentlemen*) from five hundred became fifty thousand, there came a revolution. The governing power was too widely diffused; it lacked force and concentration; and they had not reckoned with the two powers, Money and Thought, that had set those free who had been beneath their rule. So the victory over the monarchical system, obtained by the middle classes with a view to extending the number of the privileged class, will produce its natural effect—the people will triumph in turn over the middle classes. If this trouble comes to pass, the indiscriminate right of suffrage bestowed upon the masses will be a dangerous weapon in their hands. The man who votes, criticises. An authority that is called in question is no longer

an authority. Can you imagine a society without a governing authority? No, you cannot. Therefore, authority means force, and a basis of just judgment should underlie force. Such are the reasons which have led me to think that the principle of popular election is a most fatal one for modern governments. I think that my attachment to the poor and suffering classes has been sufficiently proved, and that no one will accuse me of bearing any ill-will towards them; but though I admire the sublime patience and resignation with which they tread the path of toil, I must pronounce them to be unfit to take part in the government. The proletariat seem to me to be the minors of a nation, and ought to remain in a condition of tutelage. Therefore, gentlemen, the word *election*, to my thinking, is in a fair way to cause as much mischief as the words *conscience* and *liberty*, which, ill defined and ill understood, were flung broadcast among the people, to serve as watchwords of revolt and incitements to destruction. It seems to me to be a right and necessary thing that the masses should be kept in tutelage for the good of society."

"This system of yours runs so clear contrary to everybody's notions nowadays, that we have some right to ask your reasons for it," said Genestas, interrupting the doctor.

"By all means, captain."

"What is this the master is saying?" cried Jacquotte, as she went back to her kitchen. "There he is, the poor dear man, and what is he doing but advising them to crush the people! And they are listening to him——"

"I would never have believed it of M. Benassis," answered Nicolle.

"If I require that the ignorant masses should be governed by a strong hand," the doctor resumed, after a brief pause, "I should desire at the same time that the framework of the social system should be sufficiently yielding and elastic to allow those who have the will and are conscious of their ability to emerge from the crowd, to rise and take their place among the privileged classes. The aim of power of every kind is its own preservation. In order to live, a government, to-day as in the past, must press the strong men of the nation



into its service, taking them from every quarter, so as to make them its defenders, and to remove from among the people the men of energy who incite the masses to insurrection. By opening out in this way to the public ambition paths that are at once difficult and easy, easy for strong wills, difficult for weak or imperfect ones, a State averts the perils of the revolutions caused by the struggles of men of superior powers to rise to their proper level. Our long agony of forty years should have made it clear to any man who has brains that social superiorities are a natural outcome of the order of things. They are of three kinds that cannot be questioned—the superiority of the thinker, the superiority of the politician, the superiority of wealth. Is not that as much as to say, genius, power, and money, or, in yet other words—the cause, the means, and the effect? But suppose a kind of social *tabula rasa*, every social unit perfectly equal, an increase of population everywhere in the same ratio, and give the same amount of land to each family; it would not be long before you would again have all the existing inequalities of fortune; it is glaringly evident, therefore, that there are such things as superiority of fortune, of thinking capacity, and of power, and we must make up our minds to this fact; but the masses will always regard rights that have been most honestly acquired as privileges, and as a wrong done to themselves.

“The *Social Contract* founded upon this basis will be a perpetual pact between those who have and those who have not. And acting on these principles, those who benefit by the laws will be the lawmakers, for they necessarily have the instinct of self-preservation, and foresee their dangers. It is even more to their interest than to the interest of the masses themselves that the latter should be quiet and contented. The happiness of the people should be ready made for the people. If you look at society as a whole from this point of view, you will soon see, as I do, that the privilege of election ought only to be exercised by men who possess wealth, power, or intelligence, and you will likewise see that the action of the deputies they may choose to represent them should be considerably restricted.

“The maker of laws, gentlemen, should be in advance of his age. It is his business to ascertain the tendency of erroneous notions popularly held, to see the exact direction in which the ideas of a nation are tending; he labors for the future rather than for the present, and for the rising generation rather than for the one that is passing away. But if you call in the masses to make the laws, can they rise above their own level? Nay. The more faithfully an assembly represents the opinions held by the crowd, the less it will know about government, the less lofty its ideas will be, and the more vague and vacillating its policy, for the crowd is and always will be simply a crowd, and this especially with us in France. Law involves submission to regulations; man is naturally opposed to rules and regulations of all kinds, especially if they interfere with his interests; so is it likely that the masses will enact laws that are contrary to their own inclinations? No.

“Very often legislation ought to run counter to the prevailing tendencies of the time. If the law is to be shaped by the prevailing habits of thought and tendencies of a nation, would not that mean that in Spain a direct encouragement would be given to idleness and religious intolerance, in England, to the commercial spirit; in Italy, to the love of the arts that may be the expression of a society, but by which no society can entirely exist; in Germany, feudal class distinctions would be fostered; and here, in France, popular legislation would promote the spirit of frivolity, the sudden craze for an idea, and the readiness to split into factions which has always been our bane.

“What has happened in the forty years since the electors took it upon themselves to make laws for France? We have something like forty thousand laws! A people with forty thousand laws might as well have none at all. Is it likely that five hundred mediocrities (for there are never more than a hundred great minds to do the work of any one century), is it likely that five hundred mediocrities will have the wit to rise to the level of these considerations? Not they! Here is a constant stream of men poured forth from five hundred different places; they will interpret the spirit

of the law in divers manners, and there should be a unity of conception in the law.

“But I will go yet further. Sooner or later an assembly of this kind comes to be swayed by one man, and instead of a dynasty of kings, you have a constantly changing and costly succession of prime ministers. There comes a Mirabeau, or a Danton, a Robespierre, or a Napoleon, or proconsuls, or an emperor, and there is an end of deliberations and debates. In fact, it takes a determinate amount of force to raise a given weight; the force may be distributed, and you may have a less or greater number of levers, but it comes to the same thing in the end, the force must be in proportion to the weight. The weight in this case is the ignorant and suffering mass of people who form the lowest stratum of society. The attitude of authority is bound to be repressive, and great concentration of the governing power is needed to neutralize the force of a popular movement. This is the application of the principle that I unfolded when I spoke just now of the way in which the class privileged to govern should be restricted. If this class is composed of men of ability, they will obey this natural law, and compel the country to obey. If you collect a crowd of mediocrities together, sooner or later they will fall under the dominion of a stronger head. A deputy of talent understands the reasons for which a government exists; the mediocre deputy simply comes to terms with force. An assembly either obeys an idea, like the Convention in the time of the Terror; a powerful personality, like the Corps Legislatif under the rule of Napoleon; or falls under the domination of a system or of wealth, as it has done in our own day. The Republican Assembly, that dream of some innocent souls, is an impossibility. Those who would fain bring it to pass are either grossly deluded dupes or would-be tyrants. Do you not think that there is something ludicrous about an Assembly which gravely sits in debate upon the perils of a nation which ought to be roused into immediate action? It is only right of course that the people should elect a body of representatives who will decide questions of supplies and of taxation; this institution has always existed,

under the sway of the most tyrannous ruler no less than under the scepter of the mildest of princes. Money is not to be taken by force; there are natural limits to taxation, and if they are overstepped, a nation either rises up in revolt, or lays itself down to die. Again, if this elective body, changing from time to time according to the needs and ideas of those whom it represents, should refuse obedience to a bad law in the name of the people, well and good. But to imagine that five hundred men, drawn from every corner of the kingdom, will make a good law! Is it not a dreary joke, for which the people will sooner or later have to pay? They have a change of masters, that is all.

“Authority ought to be given to one man, he alone should have the task of making the laws; and he should be a man who, by force of circumstances, is continually obliged to submit his actions to general approbation. But the only restraints that can be brought to bear upon the exercise of power, be it the power of the one, of the many, or of the multitude, are to be found in the religious institutions of a country. Religion forms the only adequate safeguard against the abuse of supreme power. When a nation ceases to believe in religion, it becomes ungovernable in consequence, and its prince perforce becomes a tyrant. The Chambers that occupy an intermediate place between rulers and their subjects are powerless to prevent these results, and can only mitigate them to a very slight extent; Assemblies, as I have said before, are bound to become the accomplices of tyranny on the one hand, or of insurrection on the other. My own leanings are towards a government by one man; but though it is good, it cannot be absolutely good, for the results of every policy will always depend upon the condition and the beliefs of the nation. If a nation is in its dotage, if it has been corrupted to the core by philosophism and the spirit of discussion, it is on the high-road to despotism, from which no form of free government will save it. And, at the same time, a righteous people will nearly always find liberty even under a despotic rule. All this goes to show the necessity for restricting the right of election within very narrow limits, the necessity for a strong

government, the necessity for a powerful religion which makes the rich man the friend of the poor, and enjoins upon the poor an absolute submission to their lot. It is, in fact, really imperative that the Assemblies should be deprived of all direct legislative power, and should confine themselves to the registration of laws and to questions of taxation.

“I know that different ideas from these exist in many minds. To-day, as in past ages, there are enthusiasts who seek for perfection, and who would like to have society better ordered than it is at present. But innovations which tend to bring about a kind of social topsy-turvydom ought only to be undertaken by general consent. Let the innovators have patience. When I remember how long it has taken Christianity to establish itself; how many centuries it has taken to bring about a purely moral revolution which surely ought to have been accomplished peacefully, the thought of the horrors of a revolution, in which material interests are concerned, makes me shudder, and I am for maintaining existing institutions. ‘Each shall have his own thought,’ is the dictum of Christianity; ‘Each man shall have his own field,’ says modern law; and in this, modern law is in harmony with Christianity. Each shall have his own thought; that is a consecration of the rights of intelligence; and each shall have his own field, is a consecration of the right to property that has been acquired by toil. Hence our society. Nature has based human life upon the instinct of self-preservation, and social life is founded upon personal interest. Such ideas as these are, to my thinking, the very rudiments of politics. Religion keeps these two selfish sentiments in subordination by the thought of a future life; and in this way the harshness of the conflict of interests has been somewhat softened. God has mitigated the sufferings that arise from social friction by a religious sentiment which raises self-forgetfulness into a virtue; just as He has moderated the friction of the mechanism of the universe by laws which we do not know. Christianity bids the poor bear patiently with the rich, and commands the rich to lighten the burdens of the poor; these few words, to my mind, contain the essence of all laws, human and divine!”

"I am no statesman," said the notary; "I see in a ruler a liquidator of society which should always remain in liquidation; he should hand over to his successor the exact value of the assets which he received."

"I am no statesman either," said Benassis, hastily interrupting the notary. "It takes nothing but a little common-sense to better the lot of a commune, of a canton, or of an even wider district; a department calls for some administrative talent, but all these four spheres of action are comparatively limited, the outlook is not too wide for ordinary powers of vision, and there is a visible connection between their interests and the general progress made by the State."

"But in yet higher regions, everything is on a larger scale, the horizon widens, and from the standpoint where he is placed, the statesman ought to grasp the whole situation. It is only necessary to consider liabilities due ten years hence, in order to bring about a great deal of good in the case of the department, the district, the canton, or the commune; but when it is a question of the destinies of a nation, a statesman must foresee a more distant future and the course that events are likely to take for the next hundred years. The genius of a Colbert or of a Sully avails nothing, unless it is supported by the energetic will that makes a Napoleon or a Cromwell. A great minister, gentlemen, is a great thought written at large over all the years of a century of prosperity and splendor for which he has prepared the way. Steadfast perseverance is the virtue of which he stands most in need; and in all human affairs does not steadfast perseverance indicate a power of the very highest order? We have had for some time past too many men who think only of the ministry instead of the nation, so that we cannot but admire the real statesman as the vastest human Poetry. Ever to look beyond the present moment, to foresee the ways of Destiny, to care so little for power that he only retains it because he is conscious of his usefulness, while he does not over-estimate his strength; ever to lay aside all personal feeling and low ambitions, so that he may always be master of his faculties, and foresee, will, and act without ceasing; to compel himself to be just and

impartial, to keep order on a large scale, to silence his heart that he may be guided by his intellect alone, to be neither apprehensive nor sanguine, neither suspicious nor confiding, neither grateful nor ungrateful, never to be unprepared for an event, nor taken at unawares by an idea; to live, in fact, with the requirements of the masses ever in his mind, to spread the protecting wings of his thought above them, to sway them by the thunder of his voice and the keenness of his glance; seeing all the while not the details of affairs, but the great issues at stake, is not that to be something more than a mere man? Therefore the names of the great and noble fathers of nations cannot but be household words forever."

There was silence for a moment, during which the guests looked at one another.

"Gentlemen, you have not said a word about the army!" cried Genestas. "A military organization seems to me to be the real type on which all good civil society should be modeled; the Sword is the guardian of a nation."

The justice of the peace laughed softly.

"Captain," he said, "an old lawyer once said that empires began with the sword and ended with the desk; we have reached the desk stage by this time."

"And now that we have settled the fate of the world, gentlemen, let us change the subject. Come, captain, a glass of Hermitage," cried the doctor, laughing.

"Two, rather than one," said Genestas, holding out his glass. "I mean to drink them both to your health—to a man who does honor to the species."

"And who is dear to all of us," said the curé in gentle tones.

"Do you mean to force me into the sin of pride, M. Janvier?"

"M. le Curé has only said in a low voice what all the canton says aloud," said Cambon.

"Gentlemen, I propose that we take a walk to the parsonage by moonlight, and see M. Janvier home."

"Let us start," said the guests, and they prepared to accompany the curé.

"Shall we go to the barn?" said the doctor, laying a hand on Genestas's arm. They had taken leave of the curé and the other guests. "You will hear them talking about Napoleon, Captain Blucheau. Coguelat, the postman, is there, and there are several of his cronies who are sure to draw him out on the subject of the idol of the people. Nicolle, my stableman, has set a ladder so that we can climb up on to the hay; there is a place from which we can look down on the whole scene. Come along, an up-sitting is something worth seeing, believe me. It will not be the first time that I have hidden in the hay to overhear a soldier's tales or the stories that peasants tell among themselves. We must be careful to keep out of sight though, as these good folk turn shy and put on company manners as soon as they see a stranger."

"Eh! my dear sir," said Genestas, "have I not often pretended to be asleep so as to hear my troopers talking out on bivouac? My word, I once heard a droll yarn reeled off by an old quartermaster for some conscripts who were afraid of war; I never laughed so heartily in any theater in Paris. He was telling them about the Retreat from Moscow, he told them that the army had nothing but the clothes they stood up in, that their wine was iced, that the dead stood stock-still in the road just where they were, that they had seen White Russia, and that they currycombed the horses there with their teeth, that those who were fond of skating had fine times of it, and people who had a fancy for savory ices had as much as they could put away, that the women were generally poor company, but that the only thing they could really complain of was the want of hot water for shaving. In fact, he told them such a pack of absurdities, that even an old quartermaster who had lost his nose with a frostbite, so that they had dubbed him *Nez-restant*, was fain to laugh."

"Hush!" said Benassis, "here we are. I will go first; follow after me."

Both of them scaled the ladder and hid themselves in the hay, in a place from whence they could have a good view of the party below, who had not heard a sound overhead.



Little groups of women were clustered about three or four candles. Some of them sewed, others were spinning, a good few of them were doing nothing, and sat with their heads strained forward, and their eyes fixed on an old peasant who was telling a story. The men were standing about for the most part, or lying at full length on the trusses of hay. Every group was absolutely silent. Their faces were barely visible by the flickering gleams of the candles by which the women were working, although each candle was surrounded by a glass globe filled with water, in order to concentrate the light. The thick darkness and shadow that filled the roof and all the upper part of the barn seemed still further to diminish the light that fell here and there upon the workers' heads with such picturesque effects of light and shade. Here, it shone full upon the bright wondering eyes and brown forehead of a little peasant maiden; and there the straggling beams brought out the outlines of the rugged brows of some of the older men, throwing up their figures in sharp relief against the dark background, and giving a fantastic appearance to their worn and weather-stained garb. The attentive attitude of all these people and the expression on all their faces showed that they had given themselves up entirely to the pleasure of listening, and that the narrator's sway was absolute. It was a curious scene. The immense influence that poetry exerts over every mind was plainly to be seen. For is not the peasant who demands that the tale of wonder should be simple, and that the impossible should be well-nigh credible, a lover of poetry of the purest kind?

"She did not like the look of the house at all," the peasant was saying as the two newcomers took their places where they could overhear him; "but the poor little hunchback was so tired out with carrying her bundle of hemp to market, that she went in; besides, the night had come, and she could go no further. She only asked to be allowed to sleep there, and ate nothing but a crust of bread that she took from her wallet. And inasmuch as the woman who kept house for the brigands knew nothing about what they had planned to do that night, she let the old woman

into the house, and sent her upstairs without a light. Our hunchback throws herself down on a rickety truckle bed, says her prayers, thinks about her hemp, and is dropping off to sleep. But before she is fairly asleep, she hears a noise, and in walk two men carrying a lantern, and each man had a knife in his hand. Then fear came upon her; for in those times, look you, they used to make *pâtés* of human flesh for the seigneurs, who were very fond of them. But the old woman plucked up heart again, for she was so thoroughly shriveled and wrinkled that she thought they would think her a poorish sort of diet. The two men went past the hunchback and walked up to a bed that there was in the great room, and in which they had put the gentleman with the big portmanteau, the one that passed for a *negromancer*. The taller man holds up the lantern and takes the gentleman by the feet, and the short one, that had pretended to be drunk, clutches hold of his head and cuts his throat, clean, with one stroke, swish! Then they leave the head and body lying in its own blood up there, steal the portmanteau, and go downstairs with it. Here is our woman in a nice fix! First of all she thinks of slipping out, before anyone can suspect it, not knowing that Providence had brought her there to glorify God and to bring down punishment on the murderers. She was in a great fright, and when one is frightened one thinks of nothing else. But the woman of the house had asked the two brigands about the hunchback, and that had alarmed them. So back they come, creeping softly up the wooden staircase. The poor hunchback curls up in a ball with fright, and she hears them talking about her in whispers.

“ ‘Kill her, I tell you.’ ”

“ ‘No need to kill her.’ ”

“ ‘Kill her!’ ”

“ ‘No!’ ”

“Then they come in. The woman, who was no fool, shuts her eyes and pretends to be asleep. She sets to work to sleep like a child, with her hand on her heart, and takes to breathing like a cherub. The man opens the lantern and shines the light straight into the eyes of the sleeping

old woman—she does not move an eyelash, she is in such a terror for her neck.

“‘She is sleeping like a log; you can see that quite well,’ so says the tall one.

“‘Old women are so cunning!’ answers the short man. ‘I will kill her. We shall feel easier in our minds. Besides, we will salt her down to feed the pigs.’

“The old woman hears all this talk, but she does not stir.

“‘Oh! it is all right, she is asleep,’ says the short ruffian, when he saw that the hunchback had not stirred.

“That is how the old woman saved her life. And she may be fairly called courageous; for it is a fact that there are not many girls here who could have breathed like cherubs while they heard that talk going on about the pigs. Well, the two brigands set to work to lift up the dead man; they wrap him round in the sheets and chuck him out into the little yard; and the old woman hears the pigs scampering up to eat him, and grunting, *Hon! hon!*

“So when morning comes,” the narrator resumed after a pause, “the woman gets up and goes down, paying a couple of sous for her bed. She takes up her wallet, goes on just as if nothing had happened, asks for the news of the countryside, and gets away in peace. She wants to run. Running is quite out of the question, her legs fail her for fright; and lucky it was for her that she could not run, for this reason. She had barely gone half a quarter of a league before she sees one of the brigands coming after her, just out of craftiness to make quite sure that she had seen nothing. She guesses this, and sits herself down on a boulder.

“‘What is the matter, good woman?’ asks the short one, for it was the shorter one and the wickeder of the two who was dogging her.

“‘Oh! master,’ says she, ‘my wallet is so heavy, and I am so tired, that I badly want some good man to give me his arm’ (sly thing, only listen to her!) ‘if I am to get back to my poor home.’

“Thereupon the brigand offers to go along with her, and she accepts his offer. The fellow takes hold of her arm to

see if she is afraid. Not she! She does not tremble a bit, and walks quietly along. So there they are, chatting away as nicely as possible, all about farming, and the way to grow hemp, till they come to the outskirts of the town, where the hunchback lived, and the brigand made off for fear of meeting some of the sheriff's people. The woman reached her house at midday, and waited there till her husband came home; she thought and thought over all that had happened on her journey and during the night. The hemp-grower came home in the evening. He was hungry; something must be got ready for him to eat. So while she greases her frying-pan, and gets ready to fry something for him, she tells him how she sold her hemp, and gabbles away as females do, but not a word does she say about the pigs, nor about the gentleman who was murdered and robbed and eaten. She holds her frying-pan in the flames so as to clean it, draws it out again to give it a wipe, and finds it full of blood.

"'What have you been putting into it?' says she to her man.

"'Nothing,' says he.

"She thinks it must have been a nonsensical piece of woman's fancy, and puts her frying-pan into the fire again. . . . *Pouf!* A head comes tumbling down the chimney!

"'Oh! look! It is nothing more nor less than the dead man's head,' says the old woman. 'How he stares at me! What does he want!'

"'You must avenge me!' says a voice.

"'What an idiot you are!' said the hemp-grower. 'Always seeing something or other that has no sort of sense about it! Just you all over.'

"He takes up the head, which snaps at his finger, and pitches it out into the yard.

"'Get on with my omelette,' he says, 'and do not bother yourself about that. 'Tis a cat.'

"'A cat!' says she; 'it was as round as a ball.'

"She puts back her frying-pan on the fire. . . . *Pouf!* Down comes a leg this time, and they go through the whole story again. The man was no more astonished at the foot

than he had been at the head; he snatched up the leg and threw it out at the door. Before they had finished, the other leg, both arms, the body, the whole murdered traveler, in fact, came down piecemeal. No omelette all this time! The old hempseller grew very hungry indeed.

“‘By my salvation!’ said he, ‘when once my omelette is made we will see about satisfying that man yonder.’

“‘So you admit, now, that it was a man?’ said the hunchback wife. ‘What made you say it was not a head a minute ago, you great worry?’

“The woman breaks the eggs, fries the omelette, and dishes it up without any more grumbling; somehow this squabble began to make her feel very uncomfortable. Her husband sits down and begins to eat. The hunchback was frightened, and said that she was not hungry.

“‘Tap! tap!’ There was a stranger rapping at the door.

“‘Who is there?’

“‘The man that died yesterday!’

“‘Come in,’ answers the hemp-grower.

“So the traveler comes in, sits himself down on a three-legged stool, and says: ‘Are you mindful of God, who gives eternal peace to those who confess His Name? Woman! You saw me done to death, and you have said nothing! I have been eaten by the pigs! The pigs do not enter Paradise, and therefore I, a Christian man, shall go down into hell, all because a woman forsooth will not speak, a thing that has never been known before. You must deliver me,’ and so on, and so on.

“The woman, who was more and more frightened every minute, cleaned her frying-pan, put on her Sunday clothes, went to the justice, and told him about the crime, which was brought to light, and the robbers were broken on the wheel in proper style on the Market Place. This good work accomplished, the woman and her husband always had the finest hemp you ever set eyes on. Then, which pleased them still better, they had something that they had wished for for a long time, to wit, a man child, who in course of time became a great lord of the king’s.

"That is the true story of *The Courageous Hunchback Woman*."

"I do not like stories of that sort; they make me dream at night," said La Fosseuse. "Napoleon's adventures are much nicer, I think."

"Quite true," said the keeper. "Come now, M. Goguelat, tell us about the Emperor."

"The evening is too far gone," said the postman, "and I do not care about cutting short the story of a victory."

"Never mind, let us hear about it all the same! We know the stories, for we have heard you tell them many a time; but it is always a pleasure to hear them."

"Tell us about the Emperor!" cried several voices at once.

"You will have it?" answered Goguelat. "Very good, but you will see that there is no sense in the story when it is gone through at a gallop. I would rather tell you all about a single battle. Shall it be Champ-Aubert, where we ran out of cartridges, and furnished them just the same with the bayonet?"

"No, the Emperor! the Emperor!"

The old infantryman got up from his truss of hay and glanced round about on those assembled, with the peculiar somber expression in which may be read all the miseries, adventures, and hardships of an old soldier's career. He took his coat by the two skirts in front, and raised them, as if it were a question of once more packing up the knapsack in which his kit, his shoes, and all he had in the world used to be stowed; for a moment he stood leaning all his weight on his left foot, then he swung the right foot forward, and yielded with a good grace to the wishes of his audience. He swept his gray hair to one side, so as to leave his forehead bare, and flung back his head and gazed upwards, as if to raise himself to the lofty height of the gigantic story that he was about to tell.

"Napoleon, you see, my friends, was born in Corsica, which is a French island warmed by the Italian sun; it is like a furnace there, everything is scorched up, and they keep on killing each other from father to son for genera-

tions all about nothing at all—'tis a notion they have. To begin at the beginning, there was something extraordinary about the thing from the first; it occurred to his mother, who was the handsomest woman of her time, and a shrewd soul, to dedicate him to God, so that he should escape all the dangers of infancy and of his after life; for she had dreamed that the world was on fire on the day he was born. It was a prophecy! So she asked God to protect him, on condition that Napoleon should re-establish His holy religion, which had been thrown to the ground just then. That was the agreement; we shall see what came of it.

"Now, do you follow me carefully, and tell me whether what you are about to hear is natural.

"It is certain sure that only a man who had had imagination enough to make a mysterious compact would be capable of going further than anybody else, and of passing through volleys of grapeshot and showers of bullets which carried us off like flies, but which had a respect for his head. I myself had particular proof of that at Eylau. I see him yet; he climbs a hillock, takes his field-glass, looks along our lines, and says, 'That is going on all right.' One of your deep fellows, with a bunch of feathers in his cap, used to plague him a good deal from all accounts, following him about everywhere, even when he was getting his meals. This fellow wants to do something clever, so as soon as the Emperor goes away he takes his place. Oh! swept away in a moment! And that is the last of the bunch of feathers! You understand quite clearly that Napoleon had undertaken to keep his secret to himself. That is why those who accompanied him, and even his especial friends, used to drop like nuts: Duroc, Bessières, Lannes—men as strong as bars of steel, which he cast into shape for his own ends. And here is a final proof that he was the child of God, created to be the soldier's father; for no one ever saw him as a lieutenant or a captain. He is a commandant straight off! Ah! yes, indeed! He did not look more than four-and-twenty, but he was an old general ever since the taking of Toulon, when he made a beginning by showing the rest that they knew nothing about handling cannon. Next thing he

does, he tumbles upon us. A little slip of a general-in-chief of the army of Italy, which had neither bread nor ammunition nor shoes nor clothes—a wretched army as naked as a worm.

“‘Friends,’ he said, ‘here we all are together. Now, get it well into your pates that in a fortnight’s time from now you will be the victors, and dressed in new clothes; you shall all have greatcoats, strong gaiters, and famous pairs of shoes; but, my children, you will have to march on Milan to take them, where all these things are.’

“So they marched. The French, crushed as flat as a pancake, held up their heads again. There were thirty thousand of us tatterdemalions against eighty thousand swaggerers of Germans—fine tall men and well equipped; I can see them yet. Then Napoleon, who was only Bonaparte in those days, breathed goodness knows what into us, and on we marched night and day. We rap their knuckles at Montenotte; we hurry on to thrash them at Rivoli, Lodi, Arcola, and Millesimo, and we never let them go. The army came to have a liking for winning battles. Then Napoleon hems them in on all sides, these German generals did not know where to hide themselves so as to have a little peace and comfort; he drubs them soundly, cribs ten thousand of their men at a time by surrounding them with fifteen hundred Frenchmen, whom he makes to spring up after his fashion, and at last he takes their cannon, victuals, money, ammunition, and everything they have that is worth taking; he pitches them into the water, beats them on the mountains, snaps at them in the air, gobbles them up on the earth, and thrashes them everywhere.

“There are the troops in full feather again! For, look you, the Emperor (who, for that matter, was a wit) soon sent for the inhabitant, and told him that he had come there to deliver him. Whereupon the civilian finds us free quarters and makes much of us, so do the women, who showed great discernment. To come to a final end; in Ventose ’96, which was at that time what the month of March is now, we had been driven up into a corner of the Pays des Marmottes; but after the campaign, lo and behold! we were



the masters of Italy, just as Napoleon had prophesied. And in the month of March following, in one year and in two campaigns, he brings us within sight of Vienna; we had made a clean sweep of them. We had gobbled down three armies one after another, and taken the conceit out of four Austrian generals; one of them, an old man who had white hair, had been roasted like a rat in the straw before Mantua. The kings were suing for mercy on their knees. Peace had been won. Could a mere mortal have done that? No. God helped him, that is certain. He distributed himself about like the five loaves in the Gospel, commanded on the battlefield all day, and drew up his plans at night. The sentries always saw him coming and going; he neither ate nor slept. Therefore, recognizing these prodigies, the soldier adopts him for his father. But, forward!

“The other folk there in Paris, seeing all this, say among themselves—

“‘Here is a pilgrim who appears to take his instructions from Heaven above; he is uncommonly likely to lay a hand on France. We must let him loose on Asia or America, and that, perhaps, will keep him quiet.’

“The same thing was decreed for him as for Jesus Christ; for, as a matter of fact, they give him orders to go on duty down in Egypt. See his resemblance to the Son of God! That is not all, though. He calls all his fire-eaters about him, all those into whom he had more particularly put the Devil, and talks to them in this way—

“‘My friends, for the time being they are giving us Egypt to stop our mouths. But we will swallow down Egypt in a brace of shakes, just as we swallowed Italy, and private soldiers shall be princes, and shall have broad lands of their own. Forward!’

“‘Forward, lads!’ cry the sergeants.

“So we come to Toulon on the way to Egypt. Whereupon the English put to sea with all their fleet. But when we are on board, Napoleon says to us—

“‘They will not see us: and it is right and proper that you should know henceforward that your general has a star in the sky that guides us and watches over us!’

“So said, so done. As we sailed over the sea we took Malta, by way of an orange to quench his thirst for victory, for he was a man who must always be doing something. There we are in Egypt. Well and good. Different orders. The Egyptians, look you, are men who, ever since the world has been the world, have been in the habit of having giants to reign over them, and armies like swarms of ants; because it is a country full of genii and crocodiles, where they have built up pyramids as big as our mountains, the fancy took them to stow their kings under the pyramids, so as to keep them fresh, a thing which mightily pleases them all round out there. Whereupon, as we landed, the Little Corporal said to us—

“‘My children, the country which you are about to conquer worships a lot of idols which you must respect, because the Frenchman ought to be on good terms with all the world, and fight people without giving annoyance. Get it well into your heads to let everything alone at first; for we shall have it all by and by! And forward!’

“So far so good. But all those people had heard a prophecy of Napoleon, under the name of *Kchir Bonaberdis*, a word which in their lingo means, ‘The sultan fires a shot,’ and they feared him like the Devil. So the Grand Turk, Asia, and Africa have recourse to magic, and they send a demon against us, named the Madhi, who it was thought had come down from heaven on a white charger which, like its master, was bullet-proof, and the pair of them lived on the air of that part of the world. There are people who have seen them, but for my part I cannot give you any certain information about them. They were the divinities of Arabia and of the Mamelukes, who wished their troopers to believe that the Mahdi had the power of preventing them from dying in battle. They gave out that he was an angel sent down to wage war on Napoleon, and to get back Solomon’s Seal, part of their paraphernalia which they pretended our general had stolen. You will readily understand that we made them cry *peccavi* all the same.

“Ah, just tell me now how they came to know about that compact of Napoleon’s? Was that natural?

“They took it into their heads for certain that he commanded the genii, and that he went from place to place like a bird in the twinkling of an eye; and it is a fact that he was everywhere. At length it came about that he carried off a queen of theirs. She was the private property of a Mameluke, who, although he had several more of them, flatly refused to strike a bargain, though ‘the other’ offered all his treasures for her and diamonds as big as pigeon’s eggs. When things had come to that pass, they could not well be settled without a good deal of fighting; and there was fighting enough for everybody and no mistake about it.

“Then we are drawn up before Alexandria, and again at Gizeh, and before the Pyramids. We had to march over the sands and in the sun; people whose eyes dazzled used to see water that they could not drink and shade that made them fume. But we made short work of the Mamelukes as usual, and everything goes down before the voice of Napoleon, who seizes Upper and Lower Egypt and Arabia, far and wide, till we came to the capitals of kingdoms which no longer existed, where there were thousands and thousands of statues of all the devils in creation, all done to the life, and another curious thing too, any quantity of lizards. A confounded country where anyone could have as many acres of land as he wished for as little as he pleased.

“While he was busy inland, where he meant to carry out some wonderful ideas of his, the English burn his fleet for him in Aboukir Bay, for they never could do enough to annoy us. But Napoleon, who was respected East and West, and called ‘My Son’ by the Pope, and ‘My dear Father’ by Mahomet’s cousin, makes up his mind to have his revenge on England, and to take India in exchange for his fleet. He set out to lead us into Asia, by way of the Red Sea, through a country where there were palaces for halting-places, and nothing but gold and diamonds to pay the troops with, when the Mahdi comes to an understanding with the Plague, and sends it among us to make a break in our victories. Halt! Then every man files off to that parade from which no one comes back on his two feet. The dying soldier cannot take Acre, into which he forces an entrance three

times with a warrior's impetuous enthusiasm; the Plague was too strong for us; there was not even time to say 'Your servant, sir!' to the Plague. Every man was down with it. Napoleon alone was as fresh as a rose; the whole army saw him drinking in the Plague without its doing him any harm whatever.

"There now, my friends, was that natural, do you think?

"The Mamelukes, knowing that we were all on the sick list, want to stop our road; but it was no use trying that nonsense with Napoleon. So he spoke to his familiars, who had tougher skins than the rest--

"'Go and clear the road for me.'

"Junot, who was his devoted friend, and a first-class fighter, only takes a thousand men, and makes a clean sweep of the Pacha's army, which had the impudence to bar our way. Thereupon back we come to Cairo, our headquarters, and now for another story.

"Napoleon being out of the country, France allowed the people in Paris to worry the life out of her. They kept back the soldiers' pay and all their linen and clothing, left them to starve, and expected them to lay down law to the universe, without taking any further trouble in the matter. They were idiots of the kind that amuse themselves with chattering instead of setting themselves to knead the dough. So our armies were defeated, France could not keep her frontiers; The Man was not there. I say The Man, look you, because that was how they called him; but it was stuff and nonsense, for he had a star of his own and all his other peculiarities, it was the rest of us that were mere men. He hears this history of France after his famous battle of Aboukir, where with a single division he routed the grand army of the Turks, twenty-five thousand strong, and jostled more than half of them into the sea, rrrah! without losing more than three hundred of his own men. That was his last thunder-clap in Egypt. He said to himself, seeing that all was lost down there, 'I know that I am the saviour of France, and to France I must go.'

"But you must clearly understand that the army did not know of his departure; for if they had, they would have

kept him there by force to make him Emperor of the East. So there we all are without him, and in low spirits, for he was the life of us. He leaves Kléber in command, a great-watchdog who passed in his checks at Cairo, murdered by an Egyptian whom they put to death by spiking him with a bayonet, which is their way of guillotining people out there; but he suffered so much, that a soldier took pity on the scoundrel and handed his flask to him; and the Egyptian turned up his eyes then and there with all the pleasure in life. But there is not much fun for us about this little affair. Napoleon steps aboard of a little cockleshell, a mere nothing of a skiff, called the *Fortune*, and in the twinkling of an eye, and in the teeth of the English, who were blockading the place with vessels of the line and cruisers and everything that carries canvas, he lands in France, for he always had the faculty of taking the sea at a stride. Was that natural? Bah! as soon as he is landed at Fréjus, it is as good as saying that he has set foot in Paris. Everybody there worships him; but he calls the Government together.

“‘What have you done to my children, the soldiers?’ he says to the lawyers. ‘You are a set of good-for-nothings who make fools of other people, and feather your own nests at the expense of France. It will not do. I speak in the name of everyone who is discontented.’

“Thereupon they want to put him off and to get rid of him; but not a bit of it! He locks them up in the barracks where they used to argufy and makes them jump out of the windows. Then he makes them follow in his train, and they all become as mute as fishes and supple as tobacco pouches. So he becomes Consul at a blow. He was not the man to doubt the existence of the Supreme Being; he kept his word with Providence, who had kept His promise in earnest; he sets up religion again, and gives back the churches, and they ring the bells for God and Napoleon. So everyone is satisfied: *primo*, the priests with whom he allows no one to meddle; *segondo*, the merchant folk who carry on their trades without fear of the *rapiamus* of the law that had pressed too heavily on them; *tertio*, the nobles;

for the people had fallen into an unfortunate habit of putting them to death, and he puts a stop to this.

"But there were enemies to be cleared out of the way, and he was not the one to go to sleep after mess; and his eyes, look you, traveled all over the world as if it had been a man's face. The next thing he did was to turn up in Italy; it was just as if he had put his head out of the window and the sight of him was enough; they gulp down the Austrians at Marengo like a whale swallowing gudgeons! *Haouf!* The French Victories blew their trumpets so loud that the whole world could hear the noise, and there was an end of it.

"'We will not keep on at this game any longer!' say the Germans.

"'That is enough of this sort of thing,' say the others.

"Here is the upshot. Europe shows the white feather, England knuckles under, general peace all round, and kings and peoples pretending to embrace each other. While then and there the Emperor hits on the idea of the Legion of Honor, there's a fine thing if you like!

"He spoke to the whole army at Boulogne. 'In France,' so he said, 'every man is brave. So the civilian who does gloriously shall be the soldier's sister, the soldier shall be his brother, and both shall stand together beneath the flag of honor.'

"By the time that the rest of us who were away down there in Egypt had come back again, everything was changed. We had seen him last as a general, and in no time we find that he is Emperor! And when this was settled (and it may safely be said that everyone was satisfied) there was a holy ceremony such as never was seen under the canopy of heaven. Faith, France gave herself to him, like a handsome girl to a lancer, and the Pope and all his cardinals in robes of red and gold come across the Alps on purpose to anoint him before the army and the people, who clap their hands.

"There is one thing that it would be very wrong to keep back from you. While he was in Egypt, in the desert not far away from Syria, *the Red Man* had appeared to him on

the mountain of Moses, in order to say, 'Everything is going on well.' Then again, on the eve of the victory of Marengo, the Red Man springs to his feet in front of the Emperor for the second time, and says to him—

"'You shall see the world at your feet; you shall be Emperor of the French, King of Italy, master of Holland, ruler of Spain, Portugal, and the Illyrian Provinces, protector of Germany, saviour of Poland, first eagle of the Legion of Honor, and all the rest of it.'

"That Red Man, look you, was a notion of his own, who ran on errands and carried messages, so many people say, between him and his star. I myself have never believed that; but the Red Man is, undoubtedly, a fact. Napoleon himself spoke of the Red Man who lived up in the roof of the Tuileries, and who used to come to him, he said, in moments of trouble and difficulty. So on the night after his coronation Napoleon saw him for the third time, and they talked over a lot of things together.

"Then the Emperor goes straight to Milan to have himself crowned King of Italy, and then came the real triumph of the soldier. For everyone who could write became an officer forthwith, and pensions and gifts of duchies poured down in showers. There were fortunes for the staff that never cost France a penny, and the Legion of Honor was as good as an annuity for the rank and file: I still draw my pension on the strength of it. In short, here were armies provided for in a way that had never been seen before! But the Emperor, who knew that he was to be Emperor over everybody, and not only over the army, bethinks himself of the bourgeois, and sets them to build fairy monuments in places that had been as bare as the back of my hand till then. Suppose, now, that you are coming out of Spain and on the way to Berlin; well, you would see triumphal arches, and in the sculpture upon them the common soldiers are done every bit as beautifully as the generals!

"In two or three years Napoleon fills his cellars with gold, makes bridges, palaces, roads, scholars, festivals, laws, fleets, and harbors; he spends millions on millions, ever so much, and ever so much more to it, so that I have heard

it said that he could have paved the whole of France with five-franc pieces if the fancy had taken him; and all this without putting any taxes on you people here. So when he was comfortably seated on his throne, and so thoroughly the master of the situation, that all Europe was waiting for leave to do anything for him that he might happen to want; as he had four brothers and three sisters, he said to us, just as it might be by way of conversation, in the order of the day—

“‘Children, is it fitting that your Emperor’s relations should beg their bread? No; I want them all to be luminaries, like me in fact! Therefore, it is urgently necessary to conquer a kingdom for each of them, so that the French nation may be masters everywhere, so that the Guard may make the whole earth tremble, and France may spit wherever she likes, and every nation shall say to her, as it is written on my coins, “God protects you!”’

“‘All right!’ answers the army; ‘we will fish up kingdoms for you with the bayonet.’

“Ah! there was no backing out of it, look you! If he had taken it into his head to conquer the moon, we should have had to put everything in train, pack our knapsacks, and scramble up; luckily, he had no wish for that excursion. The kings who were used to the comforts of a throne, of course, objected to be lugged off, so we had marching orders. We march, we get there, and the earth begins to shake to its center again. What times they were for wearing out men and shoe-leather! And the hard knocks that they gave us! Only Frenchmen could have stood it. But you are not ignorant that a Frenchman is a born philosopher; he knows that he must die a little sooner or a little later. So we used to die without a word, because we had the pleasure of watching the Emperor do *this* on the maps.”

Here the soldier swung quickly round on one foot, so as to trace a circle on the barn floor with the other.

“‘There, that shall be a kingdom,’ he used to say, and it was a kingdom. What fine times they were! Colonels became generals whilst you were looking at them, generals became marshals of France, and marshals became kings.



There is one of them still left on his feet to keep Europe in mind of those days, Gascon though he may be, and a traitor to France that he might keep his crown; and he did not blush for his shame, for, after all, a crown, look you, is made of gold. The very sappers and miners who knew how to read became great nobles in the same way. And I who am telling you all this have seen in Paris eleven kings and a crowd of princes all round about Napoleon, like rays about the sun! Keep this well in your minds, that as every soldier stood a chance of having a throne of his own (provided he showed himself worthy of it), a corporal of the Guard was by way of being a sight to see, and they gaped at him as he went by; for everyone came by his share after a victory, it was made perfectly clear in the bulletin. And what battles they were! Austerlitz, where the army was maneuvered as if it had been a review; Eylau, where the Russians were drowned in a lake, just as if Napoleon had breathed on them and blown them in; Wagram, where the fighting was kept up for three whole days without flinching. In short, there were as many battles as there are saints in the calendar.

“Then it was made clear beyond a doubt that Napoleon bore the Sword of God in his scabbard. He had a regard for the soldier. He took the soldier for his child. He was anxious that you should have shoes, shirts, greatcoats, bread, and cartridges; but he kept up his majesty, too, for reigning was his own particular occupation. But, all the same, a sergeant, or even a common soldier, could go up to him and call him ‘Emperor,’ just as you might say ‘My good friend’ to me at times. And he would give an answer to anything you put before him. He used to sleep on the snow just like the rest of us—in short, he looked almost like an ordinary man; but I who am telling you all these things have seen him myself with the grapeshot whizzing about his ears, no more put out by it than you are at this moment; never moving a limb, watching through his field-glass, always looking after his business; so we stood our ground likewise, as cool and calm as John the Baptist. I do not know how he did it; but whenever he spoke, a something in his

words made our hearts burn within us; and just to let him see that we were his children, and that it was not in us to shirk or flinch, we used to walk just as usual right up to the sluts of cannon that were belching smoke and vomiting battalions of balls, and never a man would so much as say, 'Look out!' It was a something that made dying men raise their heads to salute him and cry, 'Long live the Emperor!'

"Was that natural? Would you have done this for a mere man?"

"Thereupon, having fitted up all his family, and things having so turned out that the Empress Josephine (a good woman for all that) had no children, he was obliged to part company with her, although he loved her not a little. But he must have children, for reasons of State. All the crowned heads of Europe, when they heard of his difficulty, squabbled among themselves as to who should find him a wife. He married an Austrian princess, so they say, who was the daughter of the Cæsars, a man of antiquity whom everybody talks about, not only in our country, where it is said that most things were his doing, but also all over Europe. And so certain sure is that, that I who am talking to you have been myself across the Danube, where I saw the ruins of a bridge built by that man; and it appeared that he was some connection of Napoleon's at Rome, for the Emperor claimed succession there for his son.

"So, after his wedding, which was a holiday for the whole world, and when they let the people off their taxes for ten years to come (though they had to pay them just the same after all, because the excisemen took no notice of the proclamation)—after his wedding, I say, his wife had a child who was King of Rome; a child was born a King while his father was alive, a thing that had never been seen in the world before! That day a balloon set out from Paris to carry the news to Rome, and went all the way in one day. There, now! Is there one of you who will stand me out that there was nothing supernatural in that? No, it was decreed on high. And the mischief take those who

will not allow that it was wafted over by God Himself, so as to add to the honor and glory of France!

"But there was the Emperor of Russia, a friend of our Emperor's, who was put out because he had not married a Russian lady. So the Russian backs up our enemies the English; for there had always been something to prevent Napoleon from putting a spoke in their wheel. Clearly an end must be made of fowl of that feather. Napoleon is vexed, and he says to us—

"Soldiers! You have been the masters of every capital in Europe, except Moscow, which is allied to England. So, in order to conquer London and India, which belongs to them in London, I find it absolutely necessary that we go to Moscow.'

"Thereupon the greatest army that ever wore gaiters, and left its footprints all over the globe, is brought together, and drawn up with such peculiar cleverness, that the Emperor passed a million of men in review, all in a single day.

"Hourra!' cry the Russians, and there is all Russia assembled, a lot of brutes of Cossacks that you never can come up with! It was country against country, a general stramash; we had to look out for ourselves. 'It was all Asia against Europe,' as the Red Man had said to Napoleon. 'All right,' Napoleon had answered, 'I shall be ready for them.'

"And there, in fact, were all the kings who came to lick Napoleon's hand. Austria, Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony, Poland, and Italy, all speaking us fair and going along with us; it was a fine thing! The Eagles had never cooed before as they did on parade in those days, when they were reared above all the flags of all the nations of Europe. The Poles could not contain their joy because the Emperor had a notion of setting up their kingdom again; and ever since Poland and France have always been like brothers. In short, the army shouts, 'Russia shall be ours!'

"We cross the frontiers, all the lot of us. We march and better march, but never a Russian do we see. At last all our watchdogs are encamped at Borodino. That was where I received the Cross, and there is no denying that

it was a cursed battle. The Emperor was not easy in his mind; he had seen the Red Man, who said to him, 'My child, you are a little too fast for your feet; you will run short of men, and your friends will play you false.'

"Thereupon the Emperor proposes a treaty. But before he signs it, he says to us—

"'Let us give these Russians a drubbing!'

"'All right!' cried the army.

"'Forward!' say the sergeants.

"My clothes were all falling to pieces, my shoes were worn out with trapezing over those roads out there, which are not good going at all. But it is all one. 'Since here is the last of the row,' said I to myself, 'I mean to get all I can out of it.'

"We were posted before the great ravine; we had seats in the front row. The signal is given, and seven hundred guns begin a conversation fit to make the blood spurt from your ears. One should give the Devil his due, and the Russians let themselves be cut in pieces just like Frenchmen; they did not give way, and we made no advance.

"'Forward!' is the cry; 'here is the Emperor!'

"So it was. He rides past us at a gallop, and makes a sign to us that a great deal depends on our carrying the redoubt. He puts fresh heart into us; we rush forward, I am the first man to reach the gorge. Ah! *mon Dieu!* how they fell, colonels, lieutenants, and common soldiers, all alike! There were shoes to fit up those who had none, and epaulettes for the knowing fellows that knew how to write. . . . Victory is the cry all along the line! And, upon my word, there were twenty-five thousand Frenchmen lying on the field. No more, I assure you! Such a thing was never seen before; it was just like a field when the corn is cut, with a man lying there for every ear of wheat. That sobered the rest of us. The Man comes, and we make a circle round about him, and he coaxes us round (for he could be very nice when he chose), and persuades us to dine with Duke Humphrey, when we were as hungry as hunters. Then our consoler distributes the Crosses of the Legion of Honor himself, salutes the dead, and says to us, 'On to Moscow!'

“ ‘To Moscow, so be it!’ says the army.

“We take Moscow. What do the Russians do but set fire to their city! There was a blaze, two leagues of bonfire that burned for two days! The buildings fell about our ears like slates, and molten lead and iron came down in showers; it was really horrible; it was a light to see our sorrows by, I can tell you! The Emperor said, ‘There, that is enough of this sort of thing; all my men shall stay here.’

“We amuse ourselves for a bit by recruiting and repairing our frames, for we really were much fatigued by the campaign. We take away with us a gold cross from the top of the Kremlin, and every soldier had a little fortune. But on the way back the winter came down on us a month earlier than usual, a matter which the learned (like a set of fools) have never sufficiently explained; and we are nipped with the cold. We were no longer an army after that, do you understand? There was an end of generals and even of the sergeants; hunger and misery took the command instead, and all of us were absolutely equal under their reign. All we thought of was how to get back to France; no one stooped to pick up his gun or his money; everyone walked straight before him, and armed himself as he thought fit, and no one cared about glory.

“The Emperor saw nothing of his star all the time, for the weather was so bad. There was some misunderstanding between him and Heaven. Poor man! how bad he felt when he saw his Eagles flying with their backs turned on victory! That was really too rough! Well, the next thing is the Beresina. And here and now, my friends, anyone can assure you on his honor, and by all that is sacred, that *never*, no, never since there have been men on earth, never in this world has there been seen such a fricassee of an army, caissons, transports, artillery and all, in such snow as that and under such a pitiless sky. It was so cold that you burned your hand on the barrel of your gun if you happened to touch it. There it was that the pontoons saved the army, for the pontoons stood firm at their posts; it was there that Gondrin behaved like a hero, and he is the sole survivor of

all the men who were dogged enough to stand in the river so as to build the bridges on which the army crossed over, and so escaped the Russians, who still respected the Grand Army on account of its past victories. And Gondrin is an accomplished soldier," he went on, pointing to his friend, who was gazing at him with the rapt attention peculiar to deaf people, "a distinguished soldier who deserves to have your very highest esteem.

"I saw the Emperor standing by the bridge," he went on, "and never feeling the cold at all. Was that, again, a natural thing? He was looking on at the loss of his treasures, of his friends, and those who had fought with him in Egypt. Bah! there was an end of everything. Women and wagons and guns were all engulfed and swallowed up, everything went to wreck and ruin. A few of the bravest among us saved the Eagles, for the Eagles, look you, meant France, and all the rest of you; it was the civil and military honor of France that was in our keeping, there must be no spot on the honor of France, and the cold should never make her bow her head. There was no getting warm except in the neighborhood of the Emperor; for whenever he was in danger we hurried up, all frozen as we were—we who would not stop to hold out a hand to a fallen friend.

"They say, too, that he shed tears of a night over his poor family of soldiers. Only he and Frenchmen could have pulled themselves out of such a plight; but we did pull ourselves out, though, as I am telling you, it was with loss, ay, and heavy loss. The Allies had eaten up all our provisions; everybody began to betray him, just as the Red Man had foretold. The rattle-pates in Paris, who had kept quiet since the Imperial Guard had been established, think that *he* is dead, and hatch a conspiracy. They set to work in the Home Office to overturn the Emperor. These things come to his knowledge and worry him; he says to us at parting: 'Good-by, children; keep to your posts, I will come back again.'

"Bah! Those generals of his lose their heads at once; for when he was away, it was not like the same thing. The

marshals fall out among themselves, and make blunders, as was only natural, for Napoleon in his kindness had fed them on gold till they had grown as fat as butter, and they had no mind to march. Troubles came of this, for many of them stayed inactive in garrison towns in the rear, without attempting to tickle up the backs of the enemy behind us, and we were being driven back on France. But Napoleon comes back among us with fresh troops; conscripts they were, and famous conscripts too; he had put some thorough notions of discipline into them—the whelps were good to set their teeth in anybody. He had a bourgeois guard of honor too, and fine troops they were! They melted away like butter on a gridiron. We may put a bold front on it, but everything is against us, although the army still performs prodigies of valor. Whole nations fought against nations in tremendous battles, at Dresden, Lützen, and Bautzen, and then it was that France showed extraordinary heroism, for you must all of you bear in mind that in those times a stout grenadier only lasted six months.

“We always won the day, but the English were always on our track, putting nonsense into other nations’ heads, and stirring them up to revolt. In short, we cleared a way through all these mobs of nations; for wherever the Emperor appeared, we made a passage for him; for on the land as on the sea, whenever he said, ‘I wish to go forward,’ we made the way.

“There comes a final end to it at last. We are back in France; and in spite of the bitter weather, it did one’s heart good to breathe one’s native air again, it set up many a poor fellow; and as for me, it put new life into me, I can tell you. But it was a question all at once of defending France, our fair land of France. All Europe was up in arms against us; they took it in bad part that we had tried to keep the Russians in order by driving them back within their own borders, so that they should not gobble us up, for those Northern folk have a strong liking for eating up the men of the South, it is a habit they have; I have heard the same thing of them from several generals.

“So the Emperor finds his own father-in-law, his friends

whom he had made crowned kings, and the rabble of princes to whom he had given back their thrones, were all against him. Even Frenchmen and allies in our own ranks turned against us, by orders from high quarters, as at Leipsic. Common soldiers would hardly be capable of such abominations; yet these princes, as they called themselves, broke their words three times a day! The next thing they do is to invade France. Wherever our Emperor shows his lion's face, the enemy beats a retreat; he worked more miracles for the defense of France than he had ever wrought in the conquest of Italy, the East, Spain, Europe, and Russia; he has a mind to bury every foreigner in French soil, to give them a respect for France, so he lets them come close up to Paris, so as to do for them at a single blow, and to rise to the highest height of genius in the biggest battle that ever was fought, a mother of battles! But the Parisians wanting to save their trumpery skins, and afraid for their twopenny shops, open their gates, and there is a beginning of the *ragusades*, and an end of all joy and happiness; they make a fool of the Empress, and fly the white flag out at the windows. The Emperor's closest friends among his generals forsake him at last and go over to the Bourbons, of whom no one had ever heard tell. Then he bids us farewell at Fontainebleau:

“ ‘Soldiers!’ . . . (I can hear him yet, we were all crying just like children; the Eagles and the flags had been lowered as if for a funeral. Ah! and it was a funeral, I can tell you; it was the funeral of the Empire; those smart armies of his were nothing but skeletons now.) So he stood there on the flight of steps before his château, and he said—

“ ‘Children, we have been overcome by treachery, but we shall meet again up above in the country of the brave. Protect my child, I leave him in your care. *Long live Napoleon II.!*’

“ He had thought of killing himself, so that no one should behold Napoleon after his defeat; like Jesus Christ before the Crucifixion, he thought himself forsaken by God and by his talisman, and so he took enough poison to kill a regi-



ment, but it had no effect whatever upon him. Another marvel! he discovered that he was immortal; and feeling sure of his case, and knowing that he should be Emperor forever, he went to an island for a little while, so as to study the dispositions of those folk who did not fail to make blunder upon blunder. Whilst he was biding his time, the Chinese and the brutes out in Africa, the Moors and what-not, awkward customers all of them, were so convinced that he was something more than mortal, that they respected his flag, saying that God would be displeased if anyone meddled with it. So he reigned over all the rest of the world, although the doors of his own France had been closed upon him.

“Then he goes on board the same nutshell of a skiff that he sailed in from Egypt, passes under the noses of the English vessels, and sets foot in France. France recognizes her Emperor, the cuckoo flits from steeple to steeple; France cries with one voice, ‘Long live the Emperor!’ The enthusiasm for that Wonder of the Ages was thoroughly genuine in these parts. Dauphiné behaved handsomely; and I was uncommonly pleased to learn that people here shed tears of joy on seeing his gray overcoat once more.

“It was on March 1st that Napoleon set out with two hundred men to conquer the kingdom of France and Navarre, which by March 20th had become the French Empire again. On that day he found himself in Paris, and a clean sweep had been made of everything; he had won back his beloved France, and had called all his soldiers about him again, and three words of his had done it all—‘Here am I!’ ’Twas the greatest miracle God ever worked! Was it ever known in the world before that a man should do nothing but show his hat, and a whole Empire became his? They fancied that France was crushed, did they? Never a bit of it. A National Army springs up again at the sight of the Eagle, and we all march to Waterloo. There the Guard fall all as one man. Napoleon in his despair heads the rest, and flings himself three times on the enemy’s guns without finding the death he sought; we all saw him do it, we soldiers, and the day was lost! That night the Emperor calls all

his old soldiers about him, and there on the battlefield, which was soaked with our blood, he burns his flags and his Eagles—the poor Eagles that had never been defeated, that had cried, ‘Forward!’ in battle after battle, and had flown above us all over Europe. That was the end of the Eagles—all the wealth of England could not purchase for her one tail-feather. The rest is sufficiently known.

“The Red Man went over to the Bourbons like the low scoundrel he is. France is prostrate, the soldier counts for nothing, they rob him of his due, send him about his business, and fill his place with nobles who could not walk, they were so old, so that it made you sorry to see them. They seize Napoleon by treachery, the English shut him up on a desert island in the ocean, on a rock ten thousand feet above the rest of the world. That is the final end of it; there he has to stop till the Red Man gives him back his power again, for the happiness of France. A lot of them say that he is dead! Dead? Oh! yes, very likely. They do not know him, that is plain! They go on telling that fib to deceive the people, and to keep things quiet for their tumble-down Government. Listen; this is the whole truth of the matter. His friends have left him alone in the desert to fulfill a prophecy that was made about him, for I forgot to tell you that his name Napoleon really means the *Lion of the Desert*. And that is gospel truth. You will hear plenty of other things said about the Emperor, but they are all monstrous nonsense. Because, look you, to no man of woman born would God have given the power to write his name in red, as he did, across the earth, where he will be remembered forever! . . . Long live ‘Napoleon, the father of the soldier, the father of the people!’ ”

“Long live General Eblé!” cried the pontooner.

“How did you manage not to die in the gorge of the redoubts at Borodino?” asked a peasant woman.

“Do I know? We were a whole regiment when we went down into it, and only a hundred foot were left standing; only infantry could have carried it; for the infantry, look you, is everything in an army——”

“But how about the cavalry?” cried Genestas, slipping

down out of the hay in a sudden fashion that drew a startled cry from the boldest.

"Hé, old boy! you are forgetting Poniatowski's Red Lancers, the Cuirassiers, the Dragoons, and the whole boiling. Whenever Napoleon grew tired of seeing his battalions gain no ground towards the end of a victory, he would say to Murat, 'Here, you! cut them in two for me!' and we set out first at a trot, and then at a gallop, *one, two!* and cut a way clean through the ranks of the enemy; it was like slicing an apple in two with a knife. Why, a charge of cavalry is nothing more nor less than a column of cannon balls."

"And how about the pontoons?" cried the deaf veteran.

"There, there! my children," Genestas went on, repenting in his confusion of the sally he had made, when he found himself in the middle of a silent and bewildered group, "there are no agents of police spying here! Here, drink to the Little Corporal with this!"

"Long live the Emperor!" all cried with one voice.

"Hush! children," said the officer, concealing his own deep sorrow with an effort. "Hush! *He is dead.* He died saying, '*Glory, France, and battle.*' So it had to be, children, he must die; but his memory—never!"

Goguelat made an incredulous gesture; then he whispered to those about him, "The officer is still in the service, and orders have been issued that they are to tell the people that the Emperor is dead. You must not think any harm of him, because, after all, a soldier must obey orders."

As Genestas went out of the barn, he heard La Fosseuse say, "That officer, you know, is M. Benassis's friend, and a friend of the Emperor's."

Every soul in the barn rushed to the door to see the commandant again; they saw him in the moonlight, as he took the doctor's arm.

"It was a stupid thing to do," said Genestas. "Quick! let us go into the house. Those Eagles, cannon, and campaigns! . . . I had quite forgotten where I was."

"Well, what do you think of our Goguelat?" asked Benassis.

“So long as such stories are told in France, sir, she will always find the fourteen armies of the Republic within her, at need; and her cannon will be perfectly able to keep up a conversation with the rest of Europe. That is what I think.”

A few moments later they reached Benassis's dwelling, and soon were sitting on either side of the hearth in the salon; the dying fire in the grate still sent up a few sparks now and then. Each was absorbed in thought. Genestas was hesitating to ask one last question. In spite of the marks of confidence that he had received, he feared lest the doctor should regard his inquiry as indiscreet. He looked searchingly at Benassis more than once; and an answering smile, full of a kindly cordiality, such as lights up the faces of men of real strength of character, seemed to give him in advance the favorable reply for which he sought. So he spoke—

“Your life, sir, is so different from the lives of ordinary men, that you will not be surprised to hear me ask you the reason of your retired existence. My curiosity may seem to you to be unmannerly, but you will admit that it is very natural. Listen a moment: I have had comrades with whom I have never been on intimate terms, even though I have made many campaigns with them; but there have been others to whom I would say, ‘Go to the paymaster and draw our money,’ three days after we had got drunk together, a thing that will happen, for the quietest folk must have a frolic fit at times. Well, then, you are one of those people whom I take for a friend without waiting to ask leave, nay, without so much as knowing wherefore.”

“Captain Bluteau——”

Whenever the doctor had called his guest by his assumed name, the latter had been unable for some time past to suppress a slight grimace. Benassis, happening to look up just then, caught this expression of repugnance; he sought to discover the reason of it, and looked full into the soldier's face, but the real enigma was well-nigh insoluble for him, so he set down these symptoms to physical suffering, and went on—

"Captain, I am about to speak of myself. I have had to force myself to do so already several times since yesterday, while telling you about the improvements that I have managed to introduce here; but it was a question of the interests of the people and the commune, with which mine are necessarily bound up. But, now, if I tell you my story, I should have to speak wholly of myself, and mine has not been a very interesting life."

"If it were as uneventful as La Fosseuse's life," answered Genestas, "I should still be glad to know about it; I should like to know the untoward events that could bring a man of your caliber into this canton."

"Captain, for these twelve years I have lived in silence; and now, as I wait at the brink of the grave for the stroke that shall cast me into it, I will candidly own to you that this silence is beginning to weigh heavily upon me. I have borne my sorrows alone for twelve years; I have had none of the comfort that friendship gives in such full measure to a heart in pain. My poor sick folk and my peasants certainly set me an example of un murmuring resignation; but they know that I at least understand them and their troubles, while there is not a soul here who knows of the tears that I have shed, no one to give me the hand-clasp of a comrade, the noblest reward of all, a reward that falls to the lot of every other; even Gondrin has not missed that."

Genestas held out his hand, a sudden impulsive movement by which Benassis was deeply touched.

"There is La Fosseuse," he went on in a different voice; "she, perhaps, would have understood as the angels might; but then, too, she might possibly have loved me, and that would have been a misfortune. Listen, captain, my confession could only be made to an old soldier who looks as leniently as you do on the failings of others, or to some young man who has not lost the illusions of youth; for only a man who knows life well, or a lad to whom it is all unknown, could understand my story. The captains of past times who fell upon the field of battle used to make their last confession to the cross on the hilt of their sword; if there was no priest at hand, it was the sword that received

and kept the last confidences between a human soul and God. And will you hear and understand me, for you are one of Napoleon's finest sword-blades, as thoroughly tempered and as strong as steel? Some parts of my story can only be understood by a delicate tenderness, and through a sympathy with the beliefs that dwell in simple hearts; beliefs which would seem absurd to the sophisticated people who make use in their own lives of the prudential maxims of worldly wisdom that only apply to the government of states. To you I shall speak openly and without reserve, as a man who does not seek to apologize for his life with the good and evil done in the course of it; as one who will hide nothing from you, because he lives so far from the world of to-day, careless of the judgments of man, and full of hope in God."

Benassis stopped, rose to his feet, and said, "Before I begin my story, I will order tea. Jacquotte has never missed asking me if I will take it for these twelve years past, and she will certainly interrupt us. Do you care about it, captain?"

"No, thank you."

In another moment Benassis returned.

#### IV

### THE COUNTRY DOCTOR'S CONFESSION

"I WAS born in a little town in Languedoc," the doctor resumed. "My father had been settled there for many years, and there my early childhood was spent. When I was eight years old I was sent to the school of the Oratorians at Sorrèze, and only left it to finish my studies in Paris. My father had squandered his patrimony in the course of an exceedingly wild and extravagant youth. He had retrieved his position partly by a fortunate marriage, partly by the slow persistent thrift characteristic of provincial life; for in the provinces people pride themselves on accumulating rather than on spending, and all the ambition

in a man's nature is either extinguished or directed to money-getting, for want of any nobler end. So he had grown rich at last, and thought to transmit to his only son all the cut-and-dried experience which he himself had purchased at the price of his lost illusions; a noble last illusion of age which fondly seeks to bequeath its virtues and its wary prudence to heedless youth, intent only on the enjoyment of the enchanted life that lies before it.

"This foresight on my father's part led him to make plans for my education for which I had to suffer. He sedulously concealed my expectations of wealth from me, and during the fairest years of my youth compelled me, for my own good, to endure the burden of anxiety and hardship that presses upon a young man who has his own way to make in the world. His idea in so doing was to instill the virtues of poverty into me—patience, a thirst for learning, and a love of work for its own sake. He hoped to teach me to set a proper value on my inheritance, by letting me learn, in this way, all that it costs to make a fortune; wherefore, as soon as I was old enough to understand his advice, he urged me to choose a profession and to work steadily at it. My tastes inclined me to the study of medicine.

"So I left Sorrèze, after ten years of the almost monastic discipline of the Oratorians; and, fresh from the quiet life of a remote provincial school, I was taken straight to the capital. My father went with me in order to introduce me to the notice of a friend of his; and (all unknown to me) my two elders took the most elaborate precautions against any ebullitions of youth on my part, innocent lad though I was. My allowance was rigidly computed on a scale based upon the absolute necessities of life, and I was obliged to produce my certificate of attendance at the *École de Médecine* before I was allowed to draw my quarter's income. The excuse for this sufficiently humiliating distrust was the necessity of my acquiring methodical and business-like habits. My father, however, was not sparing of money for all the necessary expenses of my education and for the amusements of Parisian life.

"His old friend was delighted to have a young man to

guide through the labyrinth into which I had entered. He was one of those men whose natures lead them to docket their thoughts, feelings, and opinions every whit as carefully as their papers. He would turn up last year's memorandum book, and could tell in a moment what he had been doing a twelvemonth since in this very month, day, and hour of the present year. Life, for him, was a business enterprise, and he kept the books after the most approved business methods. There was real worth in him though he might be punctilious, shrewd, and suspicious, and though he never lacked specious excuses for the precautionary measures that he took with regard to me. He used to buy all my books; he paid for my lessons; and once, when the fancy took me to learn to ride, the good soul himself found me out a riding-school, went thither with me, and anticipated my wishes by putting a horse at my disposal whenever I had a holiday. In spite of all this cautious strategy, which I managed to defeat as soon as I had any temptation to do so, the kind old man was a second father to me.

"'My friend,' he said, as soon as he surmised that I should break away altogether from my leading-strings, unless he relaxed them, 'young folk are apt to commit follies which draw down the wrath of their elders upon their heads, and you may happen to want money at some time or other; if so, come to me. Your father helped me nobly once upon a time, and I shall always have a few crowns to spare for you; but never tell me any lies, and do not be ashamed to own to your faults. I myself was young once; we shall always get on well together, like two good comrades.'

"My father found lodgings for me with some quiet, middle-class people in the Latin Quarter, and my room was furnished nicely enough; but this first taste of independence, my father's kindness, and the self-denial which he seemed to be exercising for me, brought me but little happiness. Perhaps the value of liberty cannot be known until it has been experienced; and the memories of the freedom of my childhood had been almost effaced by the irksome and dreary life at school, from which my spirits had scarcely recovered. In addition to this, my father had urged new tasks upon



me, so that altogether Paris was an enigma. You must acquire some knowledge of its pleasures before you can amuse yourself in Paris.

“My real position, therefore, was quite unchanged, save that my new *lycée* was a much larger building, and was called the *École de Médecine*. Nevertheless, I studied away bravely at first; I attended lectures diligently; I worked desperately hard and without relaxation, so strongly was my imagination affected by the abundant treasures of knowledge to be gained in the capital. But very soon I heedlessly made acquaintances; danger lurks hidden beneath the rash confiding friendships that have so strong a charm for youth, and gradually I was drawn into the dissipated life of the capital. I became an enthusiastic lover of the theater; and with my craze for actors and the play, the work of my demoralization began. The stage, in a great metropolis, exerts a very deadly influence over the young; they never quit the theater save in a state of emotional excitement almost always beyond their power to control; society and the law seem to me to be accessories to the irregularities brought about in this way. Our legislation has shut its eyes, so to speak, to the passions that torment a young man between twenty and five-and-twenty years of age. In Paris he is assailed by temptations of every kind. Religion may preach and Law may demand that he should walk uprightly, but all his surroundings and the tone of those about him are so many incitements to evil. Do not the best of men and the most devout women there look upon continence as ridiculous? The great city, in fact, seems to have set herself to give encouragement to vice and to this alone; for a young man finds that the entrance to every honorable career in which he might look for success is barred by hindrances even more numerous than the snares that are continually set for him, so that through his weaknesses he may be robbed of his money.

“For a long while I went every evening to some theater, and little by little I fell into idle ways. I grew more and more slack over my work; even my most pressing tasks were apt to be put off till the morrow, and before very long there was an end of my search after knowledge for its own

sake; I did nothing more than the work which was absolutely required to enable me to get through the examinations that must be passed before I could become a doctor. I attended the public lectures, but I no longer paid any attention to the professors, who, in my opinion, were a set of dotards. I had already broken my idols— I became a Parisian.

“To be brief, I led the aimless drifting life of a young provincial thrown into the heart of a great city; still retaining some good and true feeling, still clinging more or less to the observance of certain rules of conduct, still fighting in vain against the debasing influence of evil examples, though I offered but a feeble, half-hearted resistance, for the enemy had accomplices within me. Yes, sir, my face is not misleading; past storms have plainly left their traces there. Yet, since I had drunk so deeply of the pure fountain of religion in my early youth, I was haunted in the depths of my soul, through all my wanderings, by an ideal of moral perfection which could not fail one day to bring me back to God by the paths of weariness and remorse. Is not he who feels the pleasures of earth most keenly, sure to be attracted, soon or late, by the fruits of heaven?

“At first I went through the experience, more or less vivid, that always comes with youth—the countless moments of exultation, the unnumbered transports of despair. Sometimes I took my vehement energy of feeling for a resolute will, and over-estimated my powers; sometimes, at the mere sight of some trifling obstacle with which I was about to come into collision, I was far more cast down than I ought to have been. Then I would devise vast plans, would dream of glory, and betake myself to work; but a pleasure party would divert me from the noble projects based on so infirm a purpose. Vague recollections of these great abortive schemes of mine left a deceptive glow in my soul and fostered my belief in myself, without giving me the energy to produce. In my indolent self-sufficiency I was in a very fair way to become a fool, for what is a fool but a man who fails to justify the excellent opinion which he has formed of himself? My energy was directed towards no definite aims; I wished for the flowers of life without the toil of

cultivating them. I had no idea of the obstacles, so I imagined that everything was easy; luck, I thought, accounted for success in science and in business, and genius was charlatanism. I took it for granted that I should be a great man, because there was the power of becoming one within me; so I discounted all my future glory, without giving a thought to the patience required for the conception of a great work, nor of the execution, in the course of which all the difficulties of the task appear. .

"The sources of my amusements were soon exhausted. The charm of the theater does not last for very long; and, for a poor student, Paris shortly became an empty wilderness. They were dull and uninteresting people that I met with in the circle of the family with whom I lived; but these, and an old man who had now lost touch with the world, were all the society that I had.

"So, like every young man who takes a dislike to the career marked out for him, I rambled about the streets for whole days together; I strolled along the quays, through the museums and public gardens, making no attempt to arrive at a clear understanding of my position, and without a single definite idea in my head. The burden of unemployed energies is more felt at that age than at any other; there is such an abundance of vitality running to waste, so much activity without result. I had no idea of the power that a resolute will puts into the hands of a man in his youth; for when he has ideas and puts his whole heart and soul into the work of carrying them out, his strength is yet further increased by the undaunted courage of youthful convictions.

"Childhood in its simplicity knows nothing of the perils of life; youth sees both its vastness and its difficulties, and at the prospect the courage of youth sometimes flags. We are still serving our apprenticeship to life; we are new to the business, a kind of faint-heartedness overpowers us, and leaves us in an almost dazed condition of mind. We feel that we are helpless aliens in a strange country. At all ages we shrink back involuntarily from the unknown. And a young man is very much like the soldier who will walk

up to the cannon's mouth, and is put to flight by a ghost. He hesitates among the maxims of the world. The rules of attack and of self-defense are alike unknown to him; he can neither give nor take; he is attracted by women, and stands in awe of them; his very good qualities tell against him, he is all generosity and modesty, and completely innocent of mercenary designs. Pleasure and not interest is his object when he tells a lie; and among many dubious courses, the conscience, with which as yet he has not juggled, points out to him the right way, which he is slow to take.

"There are men whose lives are destined to be shaped by the impulses of their hearts, rather than by any reasoning process that takes place in their heads, and such natures as these will remain for a long while in the position that I have described. This was my own case. I became the plaything of two contending impulses; the desires of youth were always held in check by a faint-hearted sentimentality. Life in Paris is a cruel ordeal for impressionable natures, the great inequalities of fortune or of position inflame their souls and stir up bitter feelings. In that world of magnificence and pettiness envy is more apt to be a dagger than a spur. You are bound either to fall a victim or to become a partisan in this incessant strife of ambitions, desires, and hatreds, in the midst of which you are placed; and by slow degrees the picture of vice triumphant and virtue made ridiculous produces its effect on a young man, and he wavers; life in Paris soon rubs the bloom from conscience, the infernal work of demoralization has begun, and is soon accomplished. The first of pleasures, that which at the outset comprehends all the others, is set about with such perils that it is impossible not to reflect upon the least actions which it provokes, impossible not to calculate all its consequences. These calculations lead to selfishness. If some poor student, carried away by an impassioned enthusiasm, is fain to rise above selfish consideration, the suspicious attitude of those about him makes him pause and doubt; it is so hard not to share their mistrust, so difficult not to be on his guard against his own generous thoughts. His heart is scared and contracted by this struggle, the current of life sets towards

the brain, and the callousness of the Parisian is the result—the condition of things in which schemes for power and wealth are concealed by the most charming frivolity, and lurk beneath the sentimental transports that take the place of enthusiasm. The simplest natured woman in Paris always keeps a clear head even in the intoxication of happiness.

“This atmosphere was bound to affect my opinions and my conduct. The errors that have poisoned my life would have lain lightly on many a conscience, but we in the South have a religious faith that leads us to believe in a future life, and in the truths set forth by the Catholic Church. These beliefs give depth and gravity to every feeling, and to remorse a terrible and lasting power.

“The army were the masters of society at the time when I was studying medicine. In order to shine in women’s eyes, one had to be a colonel at the very least. A poor student counted for absolutely nothing. Goaded by the strength of my desires, and finding no outlet for them; hampered at every step and in every wish by the want of money; looking on study and fame as too slow a means of arriving at the pleasures that tempted me; drawn one way by my inward scruples, and another by evil examples; meeting with every facility for low dissipation, and finding nothing but hindrances barring the way to good society, I passed my days in wretchedness, overwhelmed by a surging tumult of desires, and by indolence of the most deadly kind, utterly cast down at times, only to be as suddenly elated.

“The catastrophe which at length put an end to this crisis was commonplace enough. The thought of troubling the peace of a household has always been repugnant to me; and not only so, I could not dissemble my feelings, the instinct of sincerity was too strong in me; I should have found it a physical impossibility to lead a life of glaring falsity. There is for me but little attraction in pleasures that must be snatched. I wish for full consciousness of my happiness. I led a life of solitude, for which there seemed to be no remedy; for I shrank from openly vicious courses, and the many efforts that I made to enter society were all in vain. There I might have met with some woman

who would have undertaken the task of teaching me the perils of every path, who would have formed my manners, counseled me without wounding my vanity, and introduced me everywhere where I was likely to make friends who would be useful to me in my future career. In my despair, an intrigue of the most dangerous kind would perhaps have had its attractions for me; but even peril was out of my reach. My inexperience sent me back again to my solitude, where I dwelt face to face with my thwarted desires.

"At last I formed a connection, at first a secret one, with a girl, whom I persuaded, half against her will, to share my life. Her people were worthy folk, who had but small means. It was not very long before she left her simple sheltered life, and fearlessly intrusted me with a future that virtue would have made happy and fair; thinking, no doubt, that my narrow income was the surest guarantee of my faithfulness to her. From that moment the tempest that had raged within me ceased, and happiness lulled my wild desires and ambitions to sleep. Such happiness is only possible for a young man who is ignorant of the world, who knows nothing as yet of its accepted codes nor of the strength of prejudice; but while it lasts, his happiness is as all-absorbing as a child's. Is not first love like a return of childhood across the intervening years of anxiety and toil?

"There are men who learn life at a glance, who see it for what it is at once, who learn experience from the mistakes of others, who apply the current maxims of worldly wisdom to their own case with signal success, and make unerring forecasts at all times. Wise in their generation are such cool heads as these! But there is also a luckless race endowed with the impressionable, keenly-sensitive temperament of the poet; these are the natures that fall into error, and to this latter class I belonged. There was no great depth in the feeling that first drew me towards this poor girl; I followed my instinct rather than my heart when I sacrificed her to myself, and I found no lack of excellent reasons wherewith to persuade myself that there was no harm whatever in what I had done. And as for her—she was devotion itself, a noble soul with a clear, keen intelli-

gence and a heart of gold. She never counseled me other than wisely. Her love put fresh heart into me from the first; she foretold a splendid future of success and fortune for me, and gently constrained me to take up my studies again by her belief in me. In these days there is scarcely a branch of science that has no bearing upon medicine; it is a difficult task to achieve distinction, but the reward is great, for in Paris fame always means fortune. The unselfish girl devoted herself to me, shared in every interest, even the slightest, of my life, and managed so carefully and wisely that we lived in comfort on my narrow income. I had more money to spare, now that there were two of us, than I had ever had while I lived by myself. Those were my happiest days. I worked with enthusiasm, I had a definite aim before me, I had found the encouragement I needed. Everything I did or thought I carried to her, who had not only found the way to gain my love, but above and beyond this had filled me with sincere respect for her by the modest discretion which she displayed in a position where discretion and modesty seemed well-nigh impossible. But one day was like another, sir; and it is only after our hearts have passed through all the storms appointed for us that we know the value of a monotonous happiness, and learn that life holds nothing more sweet for us than this; a calm happiness in which the fatigue of existence is felt no longer, and the inmost thoughts of either find response in the other's soul.

"My former dreams assailed me again. They were my own vehement longings for the pleasures of wealth that awoke, though it was in love's name that I now asked for them. In the evenings I grew abstracted and moody, rapt in imaginings of the pleasures I could enjoy if I were rich, and thoughtlessly gave expression to my desires in answer to a tender questioning voice. I must have drawn a painful sigh from her who had devoted herself to my happiness; for she, sweet soul, felt nothing more cruelly than the thought that I wished for something that she could not give me immediately. Oh! sir, a woman's devotion is sublime!"

There was a sharp distress in the doctor's exclamation which seemed prompted by some recollection of his own;

he paused for a brief while, and Genestas respected his musings.

"Well, sir," Benassis resumed, "something happened which should have concluded the marriage thus begun; but instead of that it put an end to it, and was the cause of all my misfortunes. My father died and left me a large fortune. The necessary business arrangements demanded my presence in Languedoc for several months, and I went thither alone. At last I had regained my freedom! Even the mildest yoke is galling to youth; we do not see its necessity any more than we see the need to work, until we have had some experience of life. I came and went without giving an account of my actions to anyone; there was no need to do so now unless I wished, and I relished liberty with all the keen capacity for enjoyment that we have in Languedoc. I did not absolutely forget the ties that bound me; but I was so absorbed in other matters of interest, that my mind was distracted from them, and little by little the recollection of them faded away. Letters full of heartfelt tenderness reached me; but at two-and-twenty a young man imagines that all women are alike tender; he does not know love from a passing infatuation; all things are confused in the sensations of pleasure which seem at first to comprise everything. It was only later, when I came to a clearer knowledge of men and of things as they are, that I could estimate those noble letters at their just worth. No trace of selfishness was mingled with the feeling expressed in them; there was nothing but gladness on my account for my change of fortune, and regret on her own; it never occurred to her that I could change towards her, for she felt that she herself was incapable of change. But even then I had given myself up to ambitious dreams; I thought of drinking deeply of all the delights that wealth could give, of becoming a person of consequence, of making a brilliant marriage. So I read the letters, and contented myself with saying, 'She is very fond of me,' with the indifference of a coxcomb. Even then I was perplexed as to how to extricate myself from this entanglement; I was ashamed of it, and this fact as well as my perplexity led me to be cruel. We begin by wounding



the victim, and then we kill it, that the sight of our cruelty may no longer put us to the blush. Late reflections upon those days of error have unveiled for me many a dark depth in the human heart. Yes, believe me, those who best have fathomed the good and evil in human nature have honestly examined themselves in the first instance. Conscience is the starting-point of our investigations; we proceed from ourselves to others, never from others to ourselves.

“When I returned to Paris I took up my abode in a large house which, in pursuance of my orders, had been taken for me, and the one person interested in my return and change of address was not informed of it. I wished to cut a figure among young men of fashion. I waited a few days to taste the first delights of wealth; and when, flushed with the excitement of my new position, I felt that I could trust myself to do so, I went to see the poor girl whom I meant to cast off. With a woman’s quickness she saw what was passing in my mind, and hid her tears from me. She could not but have despised me; but it was her nature to be gentle and kindly, and she never showed her scorn. Her forbearance was a cruel punishment. An unresisting victim is not a pleasant thing; whether the murder is done decorously in the drawing-room, or brutally on the highway, there should be a struggle to give some plausible excuse for taking a life. I renewed my visits very affectionately at first, making efforts to be gracious, if not tender; by slow degrees I became politely civil; and one day, by a sort of tacit agreement between us, she allowed me to treat her as a stranger, and I thought that I had done all that could be expected of me. Nevertheless I abandoned myself to my new life with almost frenzied eagerness, and sought to drown in gayety any vague lingering remorse that I felt. A man who has lost his self-respect cannot endure his own society, so I led the dissipated life that wealthy young men lead in Paris. Owing to a good education and an excellent memory, I seemed cleverer than I really was, forthwith I looked down upon other people; and those who, for their own purposes, wished to prove to me that I was possessed of extraordinary abilities, found me quite convinced on that

head. Praise is the most insidious of all methods of treachery known to the world; and this is nowhere better understood than in Paris, where intriguing schemers know how to stifle every kind of talent at its birth by heaping laurels on its cradle. So I did nothing worthy of my reputation; I reaped no advantages from the golden opinions entertained of me, and made no acquaintances likely to be useful in my future career. I wasted my energies in numberless frivolous pursuits, and in the short-lived love intrigues that are the disgrace of salons in Paris, where everyone seeks for love, grows blasé in the pursuit, falls into the libertinism sanctioned by polite society, and ends by feeling as much astonished at real passion as the world is over a heroic action. I did as others did. Often I dealt to generous and candid souls the deadly wound from which I myself was slowly perishing. Yet though deceptive appearances might lead others to misjudge me, I could never overcome my scrupulous delicacy. Many times I had been duped, and should have blushed for myself had it been otherwise; I secretly prided myself on acting in good faith, although this lowered me in the eyes of others. As a matter of fact, the world has a considerable respect for cleverness, whatever form it takes, and success justifies everything. So the world was pleased to attribute to me all the good qualities and evil propensities, all the victories and defeats which had never been mine; credited me with conquest of which I knew nothing, and sat in judgment upon actions of which I had never been guilty. I scorned to contradict the slanders, and self-love led me to regard the more flattering rumors with a certain complacence. Outwardly my existence was pleasant enough, but in reality I was miserable. If it had not been for the tempest of misfortunes that very soon burst over my head, all good impulses must have perished, and evil would have triumphed in the struggle that went on within me; enervating self-indulgence would have destroyed the body, as the detestable habits of egotism exhausted the springs of the soul. But I was ruined financially. This was how it came about.

“No matter how large his fortune may be, a man is sure

to find someone else in Paris possessed of yet greater wealth, whom he must needs aim at surpassing. In this unequal contest I was vanquished at the end of four years; and, like many another harebrained youngster, I was obliged to sell part of my property and to mortgage the remainder to satisfy my creditors. Then a terrible blow suddenly struck me down.

“Two years had passed since I had last seen the woman whom I had deserted. The turn that my affairs were taking would no doubt have brought me back to her once more; but one evening, in the midst of a gay circle of acquaintances, I received a note written in a trembling hand. It only contained these few words:

“‘I have only a very little while to live, and I should like to see you, my friend, so that I may know what will become of my child—whether henceforward he will be yours; and also to soften the regret that some day you might perhaps feel for my death.’

“The letter made me shudder. It was a revelation of secret anguish in the past, while it contained a whole unknown future. I set out on foot, I would not wait for my carriage, I went across Paris, goaded by remorse, and gnawed by a dreadful fear that was confirmed by the first sight of my victim. In the extreme neatness and cleanliness beneath which she had striven to hide her poverty I read all the terrible sufferings of her life; she was nobly reticent about them in her effort to spare my feelings, and only alluded to them after I had solemnly promised to adopt our child. She died, sir, in spite of all the care lavished upon her, and all that science could suggest was done for her in vain. The care and devotion that had come too late only served to render her last moments less bitter.

“To support her little one she had worked incessantly with her needle. Love for her child had given her strength to endure her life of hardship; but it had not enabled her to bear my desertion, the keenest of all her griefs. Many times she had thought of trying to see me, but her woman’s pride had always prevented this. While I squandered floods of gold upon my caprices, no memory of the past had ever

bidden a single drop to fall in her home to help mother and child to live; but she had been content to weep, and had not cursed me; she had looked upon her evil fortune as the natural punishment of her error. With the aid of a good priest of Saint-Sulpice, whose kindly voice had restored peace to her soul, she had sought for hope in the shadow of the altar, whither she had gone to dry her tears. The bitter flood that I had poured into her heart gradually abated; and one day, when she heard her child say 'Father,' a word that she had not taught him, she forgave my crime. But sorrow and weeping and days and nights of ceaseless toil injured her health. Religion had brought its consolations and the courage to bear the ills of life, but all too late. She fell ill of a heart complaint brought on by grief and by the strain of expectation, for she always thought that I should return, and her hopes always sprang up afresh after every disappointment. Her health grew worse; and at last, as she was lying on her deathbed, she wrote those few lines, containing no word of reproach, prompted by religion, and by a belief in the goodness in my nature. She knew, she said, that I was blinded rather than bent on doing wrong. She even accused herself of carrying her womanly pride too far. 'If I had only written sooner,' she said, 'perhaps there might have been time for a marriage which would have legitimated our child.'

"It was only on her child's account that she wished for the solemnization of the ties that bound us, nor would she have sought for this if she had not felt that death was at hand to unloose them. But it was too late; even then she had only a few hours to live. By her bedside, where I learned to know the worth of a devoted heart, my nature underwent a final change. I was still at an age when tears are shed. During those last days, while the precious life yet lingered, my tears, my words, and everything I did bore witness to my heartstricken repentance. The meanness and pettiness of the society in which I had moved, the emptiness and selfishness of women of fashion, had taught me to wish for and to seek an elect soul, and now I had found it—too late. I was weary of lying words and of masked faces;

counterfeit passion had set me dreaming; I had called on love; and now I beheld love lying before me, slain by my own hands, and had no power to keep it beside me, no power to keep what was so wholly mine.

“The experience of four years had taught me to know my own real character. My temperament, the nature of my imagination, my religious principles, which had not been eradicated, but had rather lain dormant; my turn of mind, my heart that only now began to make itself felt—everything within me led me to resolve to fill my life with the pleasures of affection, to replace a lawless love by family happiness—the truest happiness on earth. Visions of close and dear companionship appealed to me but the more strongly for my wanderings in the wilderness, my grasping at pleasures unennobled by thought or feeling. So though the revolution within me was rapidly effected, it was permanent. With my Southern temperament, warped by the life I led in Paris, I should certainly have come to look without pity on an unhappy girl betrayed by her lover; I should have laughed at the story if it had been told me by some wag in merry company (for with us in France a clever *bon mot* dispels all feeling of horror at a crime), but all sophistries were silenced in the presence of this angelic creature, against whom I could bring no least word of reproach. There stood her coffin, and my child, who did not know that I had murdered his mother, smiled at me.

“She died. She died happy when she saw that I loved her, and that this new love was due neither to pity nor to the ties that bound us together. Never shall I forget her last hours. Love had been won back, her mind was at rest about her child, and happiness triumphed over suffering. The comfort and luxury about her, the merriment of her child, who looked prettier still in the dainty garb that had replaced his baby clothes, were pledges of a happy future for the little one, in whom she saw her own life renewed.

“The curé of Saint-Sulpice witnessed my terrible distress. His words well-nigh made me despair. He did not attempt to offer conventional consolation, and put the gravity of my responsibilities unsparingly before me, but I had no

need of a spur. The conscience within me spoke loudly enough already. A woman had placed a generous confidence in me. I had lied to her from the first; I had told her that I loved her, and then I had cast her off; I had brought all this sorrow upon an unhappy girl who had braved the opinion of the world for me, and who therefore should have been sacred in my eyes. She had died forgiving me. Her implicit trust in the word of a man who had once before broken his promise to her effaced the memory of all her pain and grief, and she slept in peace. Agatha, who had given me her girlish faith, had found in her heart another faith to give me—the faith of a mother. Oh! sir, the child, *her* child! God alone can know all that he was to me! The dear little one was like his mother; he had her winning grace in his little ways, his talk and ideas; but for me, my child was not only a child, but something more; was he not the token of my forgiveness, my honor?

“He should have more than a father’s affection. He should be loved as his mother would have loved him. My remorse might change to happiness if I could only make him feel that his mother’s arms were still about him. I clung to him with all the force of human love and the hope of heaven, with all the tenderness in my heart that God has given to mothers. The sound of the child’s voice made me tremble. I used to watch him while he slept with a sense of gladness that was always new, albeit a tear sometimes fell on his forehead; I taught him to come to say his prayer upon my bed as soon as he awoke. How sweet and touching were the simple words of the *Pater noster* in the innocent childish mouth! Ah! and at times how terrible! ‘*Our Father which art in heaven,*’ he began one morning; then he paused—‘Why is it not *our mother?*’ he asked, and my heart sank at his words.

“From the very first I had sown the seeds of future misfortune in the life of the son whom I idolized. Although the law has almost countenanced errors of youth by conceding to tardy regret a legal status to natural children, the insurmountable prejudices of society bring a strong force to the support of the reluctance of the law. All serious

reflection on my part as to the foundations and mechanism of society, on the duties of man, and vital questions of morality date from this period of my life. Genius comprehends at first sight the connection between a man's principles and the fate of the society of which he forms a part; devout souls are inspired by religion with the sentiments necessary for their happiness; but vehement and impulsive natures can only be schooled by repentance. With repentance came new light for me; and I, who only lived for my child, came through that child to think over great social questions.

"I determined from the first that he should have all possible means of success within himself, and that he should be thoroughly prepared to take the high position for which I destined him. He learned English, German, Italian, and Spanish in succession; and, that he might speak these languages correctly, tutors belonging to each of these various nationalities were successively placed about him from his earliest childhood. His aptitude delighted me. I took advantage of it to give him lessons in the guise of play. I wished to keep his mind free from fallacies, and strove before all things to accustom him from childhood to exert his intellectual powers, to make a rapid and accurate general survey of a matter, and then, by a careful study of every least particular, to master his subject in detail. Lastly, I taught him to submit to discipline without murmuring. I never allowed an impure or improper word to be spoken in his hearing. I was careful that all his surroundings, and the men with whom he came in contact, should conduce to one end—to ennoble his nature, to set lofty ideals before him, to give him a love of truth and a horror of lies, to make him simple and natural in manner, as in word and deed. His natural aptitude had made his other studies easy to him, and his imagination made him quick to grasp these lessons that lay outside the province of the schoolroom. What a fair flower to tend! How great are the joys that mothers know! In those days I began to understand how his own mother had been able to live and to bear her sorrow. This, sir, was the great event of my life; and now I am coming to the tragedy which drove me hither.

“It is the most ordinary commonplace story imaginable; but to me it meant the most terrible pain. For some years I had thought of nothing but my child, and how to make a man of him; then when my son was growing up and about to leave me, I grew afraid of my loneliness. Love was a necessity of my existence; this need for affection had never been satisfied, and only grew stronger with years. I was in every way capable of a real attachment; I had been tried and proved. I knew all that a steadfast love means, the love that delights to find a pleasure in self-sacrifice; in everything I did my first thought would always be for the woman I loved. In imagination I was fain to dwell on the serene heights far above doubt and uncertainty, where love so fills two beings that happiness flows quietly and evenly into their life, their looks, and words. Such love is to a life what religion is to the soul; a vital force, a power that enlightens and upholds. I understood the love of husband and wife in nowise as most people do; for me its full beauty and magnificence began precisely at the point where love perishes in many a household. I deeply felt the moral grandeur of a life so closely shared by two souls that the trivialities of everyday existence should be powerless against such lasting love as theirs. But where will the hearts be found whose beats are so nearly *isochronous* (let the scientific term pass) that they may attain to this beatific union? If they exist, nature and chance have set them far apart, so that they cannot come together; they find each other too late, or death comes too soon to separate them. There must be some good reasons for these dispensations of fate, but I have never sought to discover them. I cannot make a study of my wound, because I suffer too much from it. Perhaps perfect happiness is a monster which our species should not perpetuate. There were other causes for my fervent desire for such a marriage as this. I had no friends, the world for me was a desert. There is something in me that repels friendship. More than one person has sought me out, but, in spite of efforts on my part, it came to nothing. With many men I have been careful to show no sign of something that is called ‘superiority’; I have adapted my mind to theirs; I have placed



myself at their point of view, joined in their laughter, and overlooked their defects; any fame I might have gained, I would have bartered for a little kindly affection. They parted from me without regret. If you seek for real feeling in Paris, snares await you everywhere, and the end is sorrow. Wherever I set my foot, the ground round about me seemed to burn. My readiness to acquiesce was considered weakness; though if I unsheathed my talons, like a man conscious that he may some day wield the thunderbolts of power, I was thought ill-natured; to others, the delightful laughter that ceases with youth, and in which in later years we are almost ashamed to indulge, seemed absurd, and they amused themselves at my expense. People may be bored nowadays, but none the less they expect you to treat every trivial topic with befitting seriousness.

“A hateful era! You must bow down before mediocrity, frigidly polite mediocrity which you despise—and obey. On more mature reflection, I have discovered the reasons of these glaring inconsistencies. Mediocrity is never out of fashion, it is the daily wear of society; genius and eccentricity are ornaments that are locked away and only brought out on certain days. Everything that ventures forth beyond the protection of the grateful shadow of mediocrity has something startling about it.

“So, in the midst of Paris, I led a solitary life. I had given up everything to society, but it had given me nothing in return; and my child was not enough to satisfy my heart, because I was not a woman. My life seemed to be growing cold within me; I was bending under a load of secret misery when I met the woman who was to make me know the might of love, the reverence of an acknowledged love, love with its teeming hopes of happiness—in one word—love.

“I had renewed my acquaintance with that old friend of my father’s who had once taken charge of my affairs. It was in his house that I first met her whom I must love as long as life shall last. The longer we live, sir, the more clearly we see the enormous influence of ideas upon the events of life. Prejudices, worthy of all respect, and bred by noble religious ideas, occasioned my misfortunes. This

young girl belonged to an exceedingly devout family, whose views of Catholicism were due to the spirit of a sect improperly styled Jansenists, which, in former times, caused troubles in France. You know why?"

"No," said Genestas.

"Jansenius, Bishop of Ypres, once wrote a book which was believed to contain propositions at variance with the doctrines of the Holy See. When examined at a later date, there appeared to be nothing heretical in the wording of the text, some authors even went so far as to deny that the heretical propositions had any real existence. However it was, these insignificant disputes gave rise to two parties in the Gallican Church—the Jansenists and the Jesuits. Great men were found in either camp, and a struggle began between two powerful bodies. The Jansenists affected an excessive purity of morals and of doctrine, and accused the Jesuits of preaching a relaxed morality. The Jansenists, in fact, were Catholic Puritans, if two contradictory terms can be combined. During the Revolution, the Concordat occasioned an unimportant schism, a little segregation of ultra-Catholics who refused to recognize the Bishops appointed by the authorities with the consent of the Pope. This little body of the faithful was called the Little Church; and those within its fold, like the Jansenists, led the strictly ordered lives that appear to be a first necessity of existence in all proscribed and persecuted sects. Many Jansenist families had joined the Little Church. The family to which this young girl belonged had embraced the equally rigid doctrines of both these Puritanisms, tenets which impart a stern dignity to the character and mien of those who hold them. It is the nature of positive doctrine to exaggerate the importance of the most ordinary actions of life by connecting them with ideas of a future existence. This is the source of a splendid and delicate purity of heart, a respect for others and for self, of an indescribably keen sense of right and wrong, a wide charity, together with a justice so stern that it might well be called inexorable, and lastly, a perfect hatred of lies and of all the vices comprised by falsehood.

"I can recall no more delightful moments than those of

our first meeting at my old friend's house. I beheld for the first time this shy young girl with her sincere nature, her habits of ready obedience. All the virtues peculiar to the sect to which she belonged shone in her, but she seemed to be unconscious of her merit. There was a grace, which no austerity could diminish, about every movement of her lissom, slender form; her quiet brow, the delicate grave outlines of her face, and her clearly cut features indicated noble birth; her expression was gentle and proud; her thick hair had been simply braided, the coronet of plaits about her head served, all unknown to her, as an adornment. Captain, she was for me the ideal type that is always made *real* for us in the woman with whom we fall in love; for when we love, is it not because we recognize beauty that we have dreamed of, the beauty that has existed in idea for us is realized? When I spoke to her, she answered simply, without shyness or eagerness; she did not know what a pleasure it was to me to see her, to hear the musical sounds of her voice. All these angels are revealed to our hearts by the same signs; by the sweetness of their tones, the tenderness in their eyes, by their fair, pale faces, and their gracious ways. All these things are so blended and mingled that we feel the charm of their presence, yet cannot tell in what that charm consists, and every movement is an expression of a divine soul within. I loved passionately. This newly awakened love satisfied all my restless longings, all my ambitious dreams. She was beautiful, wealthy, and nobly born; she had been carefully brought up; she had all the qualifications which the world positively demands of a woman placed in the high position which I desired to reach; she had been well educated, she expressed herself with a sprightly facility at once rare and common in France; where the most prettily worded phrases of many women are emptiness itself, while her bright talk was full of sense. Above all, she had a deep consciousness of her own dignity which made others respect her; I know of no more excellent thing in a wife. I must stop, captain; no one can describe the woman he loves save very imperfectly, pre-existent mysteries which defy analysis lie between them.

"I very soon took my old friend into my confidence. He introduced me to her family, and gave me the countenance of his honorable character. I was received at first with the frigid politeness characteristic of those exclusive people who never forsake those whom they have once admitted to their friendship. As time went on they welcomed me almost as one of the family; this mark of their esteem was won by my behavior in the matter. In spite of my passionate love, I did nothing that could lower me in my own eyes; I did not cringe, I paid no court to those upon whom my fate depended, before all things I showed myself a man, and not other than I really was. When I was well known to them, my old friend, who was as desirous as I myself that my life of melancholy loneliness should come to an end, spoke of my hopes and met with a favorable reception; but with the diplomatic shrewdness which is almost a second nature with men of the world, he was silent with regard to an error of my youth, as he termed it. He was anxious to bring about a 'satisfactory marriage' for me, an expression that makes of so solemn an act a business transaction in which husband and wife endeavor to cheat each other. In his opinion, the existence of my child would excite a moral repugnance, in comparison with which the question of money would be as naught, and the whole affair would be broken off at once, and he was right.

"It is a matter which will be very easily settled between you and your wife; it will be easy to obtain her full and free forgiveness," he said.

"In short, he tried to silence my scruples, and all the insidious arguments that worldly wisdom could suggest were brought to bear upon me to this end. I will confess to you, sir, that in spite of my promise, my first impulse was to act straightforwardly and to make everything known to the head of the family, but the thought of his uncompromising sternness made me pause, and the probable consequences of the confession appalled me; my courage failed, I temporized with my conscience, I determined to wait until I was sufficiently sure of the affection of the girl I hoped to win, before hazarding my happiness by the terrible confession.

My resolution to acknowledge everything openly, at a convenient season, vindicated the sophistries of worldly wisdom and the sagacity of my old friend. So the young girl's parents received me as their future son-in-law without, as yet, taking their friends into their confidence.

"An infinite discretion is the distinguishing quality of pious families; they are reticent about everything, even about matters of no importance. You would not believe, sir, how this sedate gravity and reserve, pervading every least action, deepens the current of feeling and thought. Everything in that house was done with some useful end in view; the women spent their leisure time in making garments for the poor; their conversation was never frivolous; laughter was not banished, but there was a kindly simplicity about their merriment. Their talk had none of the piquancy which scandal and ill-natured gossip give to the conversation of society; only the father and uncle read the newspapers; even the most harmless journal contains references to crimes or to public evils, and she whom I hoped to win had never cast her eyes over their sheets. How strange it was, at first, to listen to these orthodox people! But in a little while, the pure atmosphere left the same impression upon the soul that subdued colors give to the eyes, a sense of serene repose and of tranquil peace.

"To a superficial observer, their life would have seemed terribly monotonous. There was something chilling about the appearance of the interior of the house. Day after day I used to see everything, even the furniture in constant use, always standing in the same place, and this uniform tidiness pervaded the smallest details. Yet there was something very attractive about their household ways. I had been used to the pleasures of variety, to the luxury and stir of life in Paris; it was only when I had overcome my first repugnance that I saw the advantages of this existence; how it lent itself to continuity of thought and to involuntary meditation; how a life in which the heart has undisturbed sway seems to widen and grow vast as the sea. It is like the life of the cloister, where the outward surroundings never vary, and thought is thus compelled to detach itself

from outward things and to turn to the infinite that lies within the soul!

“For a man as sincerely in love as I was, the silence and simplicity of the life, the almost conventual regularity with which the same things were done daily at the same hours, only deepened and strengthened love. In that profound calm the interest attaching to the least action, word, or gesture became immense. I learned to know that, in the interchange of glances and in answering smiles, there lies an eloquence and a variety of language far beyond the possibilities of the most magnificent of spoken phrases; that when the expression of the feelings is spontaneous and unforced, there is no idea of joy nor sorrow that cannot thus be communicated by hearts that understand each other. How many times I have tried to set forth my soul in my eyes or on my lips, compelled at once to speak and to be silent concerning my passion; for the young girl who, in my presence, was always serene and unconscious had not been informed of the reason of my constant visits; her parents were determined that the most important decision of her life should rest entirely with her. But does not the presence of our beloved satisfy the utmost desire of passionate love? In that presence do we not know the happiness of the Christian who stands before God? If for me more than for any other it was torture to have no right to give expression to the impulses of my heart, to force back into its depths the burning words that treacherously wrong the yet more ardent emotions which strive to find an utterance in speech; I found, nevertheless, in the merest trifles a channel through which my passionate love poured itself forth but the more vehemently for this constraint, till every occurrence came to have an excessive importance.

“I beheld her, not for brief moments, but for whole hours. There were pauses between my question and her answer, and long musings, when, with the tones of her voice lingering in my ears, I sought to divine from them the secret of her inmost thoughts; perhaps her fingers would tremble as I gave her some object of which she had been in search, or I would devise pretexts to lightly touch her dress or her

hair, to take her hand in mine, to compel her to speak more than she wished; all these nothings were great events for me. Eyes and voice and gestures were freighted with mysterious messages of love in hours of ecstasy like these, and this was the only language permitted me by the quiet maidenly reserve of the young girl before me. Her manner towards me underwent no change; with me she was always as a sister with a brother; yet, as my passion grew, and the contrast between her glances and mine, her words and my utterance, became more striking, I felt at last that this timid silence was the only means by which she could express her feelings. Was she not always in the salon whenever I came? Did she not stay there until my visit, expected and perhaps foreseen, was over? Did not this mute tryst betray the secret of her innocent soul? Nay, whilst I spoke, did she not listen with a pleasure which she could not hide?

“At last, no doubt, her parents grew impatient with this artless behavior and sober love-making. I was almost as timid as their daughter, and perhaps on this account found favor in their eyes. They regarded me as a man worthy of their esteem. My old friend was taken into their confidence; both father and mother spoke of me in the most flattering terms; I had become their adopted son, and more especially they singled out my moral principles for praise. In truth, I had found my youth again; among these pure and religious surroundings early beliefs and early faith came back to the man of thirty-two.

“The summer was drawing to a close. Affairs of some importance had detained the family in Paris longer than their wont; but when September came, and they were able to leave town at last for an estate in Auvergne, her father entreated me to spend a couple of months with them in an old château hidden away among the mountains of the Cantal. I paused before accepting this friendly invitation. My hesitation brought me the sweetest and most delightful unconscious confession, a revelation of the mysteries of a girlish heart. Evelina . . . *Dieu!*” exclaimed Benassis; and he said no more for a time, wrapped in his own thoughts.

"Pardon me, Captain Bluteau," he resumed, after a long pause. "For twelve years I have not uttered the name that is always hovering in my thoughts, that a voice calls in my hearing even when I sleep. Evelina (since I have named her) raised her head with a strange quickness and abruptness, for about all her movements there was an instinctive grace and gentleness, and looked at me. There was no pride in her face, but rather a wistful anxiety. Then her color rose, and her eyelids fell; it gave me an indescribable pleasure never felt before that they should fall so slowly; I could only stammer out my reply in a faltering voice. The emotion of my own heart made swift answer to hers. She thanked me by a happy look, and I almost thought that there were tears in her eyes. In that moment we had told each other everything. So I went into the country with her family. Since the day when our hearts had understood each other, nothing seemed to be as it had been before; everything about us had acquired a fresh significance.

"Love, indeed, is always the same, though our imagination determines the shape that love must assume; like and unlike, therefore, is love in every soul in which he dwells, and passion becomes a unique work in which the soul expresses its sympathies. In the old trite saying that love is a projection of self—an *égoïsme à deux*—lies a profound meaning known only to philosopher and poet; for it is ourself in truth that we love in that other. Yet, though love manifests itself in such different ways that no pair of lovers since the world began is like any other pair before or since, they all express themselves after the same fashion, and the same words are on the lips of every girl, even of the most innocent, convent-bred maiden—the only difference lies in the degree of imaginative charm in their ideas. But between Evelina and other girls there was this difference, that where another would have poured out her feelings quite naturally, Evelina regarded these innocent confidences as a concession made to the stormy emotions which had invaded the quiet sanctuary of her girlish soul. The constant struggle between her heart and her principles gave to the least event of her life, so peaceful in appearance, in reality so pro-



foundly agitated, a character of force very superior to the exaggerations of young girls whose manners are early rendered false by the world about them. All through the journey Evelina discovered beauty in the scenery through which we passed, and spoke of it with admiration. When we think that we may not give expression to the happiness which is given to us by the presence of one we love, we pour out the secret gladness that overflows our hearts upon inanimate things, investing them with beauty in our happiness. The charm of the scenery which passed before our eyes became in this way an interpreter between us, for in our praises of the landscape we revealed to each other the secrets of our love. Evelina's mother sometimes took a mischievous pleasure in disconcerting her daughter.

“My dear child, you have been through this valley a score of times without seeming to admire it!’ she remarked after a somewhat too enthusiastic phrase from Evelina.

“No doubt it was because I was not old enough to understand beauty of this kind, mother.’

“Forgive me for dwelling on this trifle, which can have no charm for you, captain; but the simple words brought me an indescribable joy, which had its source in the glance directed towards me as she spoke. So some village lighted by the sunrise, some ivy-covered ruin which we had seen together, memories of outward and visible things, served to deepen and strengthen the impressions of our happiness; they seemed to be landmarks on the way through which we were passing towards a bright future that lay before us.

“We reached the château belonging to her family, where I spent about six weeks, the only time in my life during which Heaven has vouchsafed complete happiness to me. I enjoyed pleasures unknown to town-dwellers—all the happiness which two lovers find in living beneath the same roof, an anticipation of the life they will spend together. To stroll through the fields, to be alone together at times, if we wished it, to look over an old water-mill, to sit beneath a tree in some lovely glen among the hills, the lovers’ talks, the sweet confidences drawn forth by which each made some progress day by day in the other’s heart. Ah! sir, the

out-of-door life, the beauty of earth and heaven, is a perfect accompaniment to the perfect happiness of the soul! To mingle our careless talk with the song of the birds among the dewy leaves, to smile at each other as we gazed on the sky, to turn our steps slowly homewards at the sound of the bell that always rings too soon, to admire together some little detail in the landscape, to watch the fitful movements of an insect, to look closely at a gleaming demoiselle fly—the delicate creature that resembles an innocent and loving girl; in such ways as these are not one's thoughts drawn daily a little higher? The memories of my forty days of happiness have in a manner colored all the rest of my life, memories that are all the fairer and fill the greater space in my thoughts, because since then it has been my fate never to be understood. To this day there are scenes of no special interest for a casual observer, but full of bitter significance for a broken heart, which recall those vanished days, and the love that is not forgotten yet.

“I do not know whether you noticed the effect of the sunset light on the cottage where little Jacques lives? Everything shone so brightly in the fiery rays of the sun, and then all at once the whole landscape grew dark and dreary. That sudden change was like the change in my own life at this time. I received from her the first, the sole and sublime token of love that an innocent girl may give; the more secretly it is given, the closer is the bond it forms, the sweet promise of love, a fragment of the language spoken in a fairer world than this. Sure, therefore, of being beloved, I vowed that I would confess everything at once, that I would have no secrets from her; I felt ashamed that I had so long delayed to tell her about the sorrows that I had brought upon myself.

“Unluckily, with the morrow of this happy day a letter came from my son's tutor, the life of the child so dear to me was in danger. I went away without confiding my secret to Evelina, merely telling her family that I was urgently required in Paris. Her parents took alarm during my absence. They feared that there I was entangled in some way, and wrote to Paris to make inquiries about me. It

was scarcely consistent with their religious principles; but they suspected me, and did not even give me an opportunity of clearing myself.

“One of their friends, without my knowledge, gave them the whole history of my youth, blackening my errors, laying stress upon the existence of my child, which (said they) I intended to conceal. I wrote to my future parents, but I received no answers to my letters; and when they came back to Paris, and I called at their house, I was not admitted. Much alarmed, I sent to my old friend to learn the reason of this conduct on their part, which I did not in the least understand. As soon as the good soul knew the real cause of it all, he sacrificed himself generously, took upon himself all the blame of my reserve, and tried to exculpate me, but all to no purpose. Questions of interest and morality were regarded so seriously by the family, their prejudices were so firmly and deeply rooted, that they never swerved from their resolution. My despair was overwhelming. At first I tried to deprecate their wrath, but my letters were sent back to me unopened. When every possible means had been tried in vain; when her father and mother had plainly told my old friend (the cause of my misfortune) that they would never consent to their daughter’s marriage with a man who had upon his conscience the death of a woman and the life of a natural son, even though Evelina herself should implore them upon her knees; then, sir, there only remained to me one last hope, a hope as slender and fragile as the willow branch at which a drowning wretch catches to save himself.

“I ventured to think that Evelina’s love would be stronger than her father’s scruples, that her inflexible parents might yield to her entreaties. Perhaps, who knows, her father had kept from her the reasons of the refusal, which was so fatal to our love. I determined to acquaint her with all the circumstances, and to make a final appeal to her; and in fear and trembling, in grief and tears, my first and last love-letter was written. To-day I can only dimly remember the words dictated to me by my despair; but I must have told Evelina that if she had dealt sincerely with me she

could not and ought not to love another, or how could her whole life be anything but a lie? she must be false either to her future husband or to me. Could she refuse to the lover, who had been so misjudged and hardly entreated, the devotion which she would have shown to him as her husband, if the marriage which had already taken place in our hearts had been outwardly solemnized? Was not this to fall from the ideal of womanly virtue? What woman would not love to feel that the promises of the heart were more sacred and binding than the claims forged by the law? I defended my errors; and in my appeal to the purity of innocence, I left nothing unsaid that could touch a noble and generous nature. But as I am telling you everything, I will look for her answer and my farewell letter," said Benassis, and he went up to his room in search of it.

He returned in a few moments with a worn pocketbook; his hands trembled with emotion as he drew from it some loose sheets.

"Here is the fatal letter," he said. "The girl who wrote those lines little knew the value that I should set upon the scrap of paper that holds her thoughts. This is the last cry that pain wrung from me," he added, taking up a second letter; "I will lay it before you directly. My old friend was the bearer of my letter of entreaty; he gave it to her without her parents' knowledge, humbling his white hair to implore Evelina to read and to reply to my appeal. This was her answer:

"'Monsieur . . .' But lately I had been her 'beloved,' the innocent name she had found by which to express her innocent love, and now she called me *Monsieur!* That one word told me everything. But listen to the rest of the letter:

"'Treachery on the part of one to whom her life was to be intrusted is a bitter thing for a girl to discover; and yet I could not but excuse you, we are so weak! Your letter touched me, but you must not write to me again, the sight of your handwriting gives me such unbearable pain. We are parted forever. I was carried away by your reasoning; it extinguished all the harsh feelings that had risen up

against you in my soul. I had been so proud of your truth! But both of us have found my father's reasoning irresistible. Yes, monsieur, I ventured to plead for you. I did for you what I have never done before, I overcame the greatest fears that I have ever known, and acted almost against my nature. Even now I am yielding to your entreaties, and doing wrong for your sake, in writing to you without my father's knowledge. My mother knows that I am writing to you; her indulgence in leaving me at liberty to be alone with you for a moment has taught me the depth of her love for me, and strengthened my determination to bow to the decree of my family, against which I had almost rebelled. So I am writing to you, monsieur, for the first and last time. You have my full and entire forgiveness for the troubles that you have brought into my life. Yes, you are right; a first love can never be forgotten. I am no longer an innocent girl; and, as an honest woman, I can never marry another. What my future will be, I know not therefore. Only you see, monsieur, that echoes of this year that you have filled will never die away in my life. But I am in no way accusing you. . . . "I shall always be beloved!" Why did you write those words? Can they bring peace to the troubled soul of a lonely and unhappy girl? Have you not already laid waste my future, giving me memories which will never cease to revisit me? Henceforth I can only give myself to God, but will He accept a broken heart? He has had some purpose to fulfill in sending these afflictions to me; doubtless it was His will that I should turn to Him, my only refuge here below. Nothing remains to me here upon this earth. You have all a man's ambition wherewith to beguile your sorrows. I do not say this as a reproach; it is a sort of religious consolation. If we both bear a grievous burden at this moment, I think that my share of it is the heavier. He in whom I have put my trust, and of whom you can feel no jealousy, has joined our lives together, and He puts them asunder according to His will. I have seen that your religious beliefs were not founded upon the pure and living faith which alone enables us to bear our woes here below. Monsieur,

if God will vouchsafe to hear my fervent and ceaseless prayers, He will cause His light to shine in your soul. Farewell, you who should have been my guide, you whom once I had the right to call "my beloved," no one can reproach me if I pray for you still. God orders our days as it pleases Him. Perhaps you may be the first whom He will call to Himself; but if I am left alone in the world, then, monsieur, intrust the care of the child to me.'

"This letter, so full of generous sentiments, disappointed my hopes," Benassis resumed, "so that at first I could think of nothing but my misery; afterwards I welcomed the balm which, in her forgetfulness of self, she had tried to pour into my wounds, but in my first despair I wrote to her somewhat bitterly—

"Mademoiselle—that word alone will tell you that at your bidding I renounce you. There is something indescribably sweet in obeying one we love, who puts us to the torture. You are right, I acquiesce in my condemnation. Once I slighted a girl's devotion; it is fitting, therefore, that my love should be rejected to-day. But I little thought that my punishment was to be dealt to me by the woman at whose feet I had laid my life. I never expected that such harshness, perhaps I should say, such rigid virtue, lurked in a heart that seemed to be so loving and so tender. At this moment the full strength of my love is revealed to me; it has survived the most terrible of all trials, the scorn you have shown for me by severing without regret the ties that bound us. Farewell forever. There still remains to me the proud humility of repentance: I will find some sphere of life where I can expiate the errors to which you, the mediator between Heaven and me, have shown no mercy. Perhaps God may be less inexorable. My sufferings, sufferings full of the thought of you, shall be the penance of a heart which will never be healed, which will bleed in solitude. For a wounded heart—shadow and silence.

"No other image of love shall be engraven on my heart. Though I am not a woman, I feel as you felt that when I said "I love you," it was a vow for life. Yes, the words then spoken in the ear of "my beloved" were not a lie;

you would have a right to scorn me if I could change. I shall never cease to worship you in my solitude. In spite of the gulf set between us, you will still be the mainspring of all my actions, and all the virtues are inspired by penitence and love. Though you have filled my heart with bitterness, I shall never have bitter thoughts of you; would it not be an ill beginning of the new tasks that I have set myself if I did not purge out all the evil leaven from my soul? Farewell, then, to the one heart that I love in the world, a heart from which I am cast out. Never has more feeling and more tenderness been expressed in a farewell, for is it not fraught with the life and soul of one who can never hope again, and must be henceforth as one dead? . . . Farewell. May peace be with you, and may all the sorrow of our lot fall to me! ”

Benassis and Genestas looked at each other for a moment after reading the two letters, each full of sad thoughts, of which neither spoke.

“As you see, this is only a rough copy of my last letter,” said Benassis; “it is all that remains to me to-day of my blighted hopes. When I had sent the letter, I fell into an indescribable state of depression. All the ties that hold one to life were bound together in the hope of wedded happiness, which was henceforth lost to me forever. I had to bid farewell to the joys of a permitted and acknowledged love, to all the generous ideas that had thronged up from the depths of my heart. The prayers of a penitent soul that thirsted for righteousness and for all things lovely and of good report, had been rejected by these religious people. At first, the wildest resolutions and most frantic thoughts surged through my mind, but happily for me the sight of my son brought self-control. I felt all the more strongly drawn towards him for the misfortunes of which he was the innocent cause, and for which I had in reality only myself to blame. In him I found all my consolation.

“At the age of thirty-four I might still hope to do my country noble service. I determined to make a name for myself, a name so illustrious that no one should remember

the stain on the birth of my son. How many noble thoughts I owe to him! How full a life I led in those days while I was absorbed in planning out his future! I feel stifled," cried Benassis. "All this happened eleven years ago, and yet to this day I cannot bear to think of that fatal year. . . . My child died, sir; I lost him!"

The doctor was silent and hid his face in his hands; when he was somewhat calmer he raised his head again, and Genestas saw that his eyes were full of tears.

"At first it seemed as if this thunderbolt had uprooted me," Benassis resumed. "It was a blow from which I could only expect to recover after I had been transplanted into a different soil from that of the social world in which I lived. It was not till some time afterwards that I saw the finger of God in my misfortunes, and later still that I learned to submit to His will and to hearken to His voice. It was impossible that resignation should come to me all at once. My impetuous and fiery nature broke out in a final storm of rebellion.

"It was long before I brought myself to take the only step befitting a Catholic, indeed my thoughts ran on suicide. This succession of misfortunes had contributed to develop melancholy feelings in me, and I deliberately determined to take my own life. It seemed to me that it was permissible to take leave of life when life was ebbing fast. There was nothing unnatural, I thought, about suicide. The ravages of mental distress affected the soul of man in the same way that acute physical anguish affected the body; and an intelligent being, suffering from a moral malady, had surely a right to destroy himself, a right he shares with the sheep, that, fallen victim to the 'staggers,' beats its head against a tree. Were the soul's diseases in truth more readily cured than those of the body? I scarcely think so, to this day. Nor do I know which is the more craven soul—he who hopes even when hope is no longer possible, or he who despairs. Death is the natural termination of a physical malady, and it seemed to me that suicide was the final crisis in the sufferings of a mind diseased, for it was in the power of the will to end them when reason showed that death was preferable



to life. So it is not the pistol, but a thought that puts an end to our existence. Again, when fate may suddenly lay us low in the midst of a happy life, can we be blamed for ourselves refusing to bear a life of misery?

“But my reflections during that time of mourning turned on loftier themes. The grandeur of pagan philosophy attracted me, and for a while I became a convert. In my efforts to discover new rights for man, I thought that with the aid of modern thought I could penetrate further into the questions to which those old-world systems of philosophy had furnished solutions.

“Epicurus permitted suicide. Was it not the natural outcome of his system of ethics? The gratification of the senses was to be obtained at any cost; and when this became impossible, the easiest and best course was for the animate being to return to the repose of inanimate nature. Happiness, or the hope of happiness, was the one end for which man existed; for one who suffered, and who suffered without hope, death ceased to be an evil, and became a good, and suicide became a final act of wisdom. This act Epicurus neither blamed nor praised; he was content to say as he poured a libation to Bacchus, *‘As for death, there is nothing in death to move our laughter or our tears.’*

“With a loftier morality than that of the Epicureans, and a sterner sense of man’s duties, Zeno and the Stoic philosophers prescribed suicide in certain cases to their followers. They reasoned thus: Man differs from the brute in that he has the sovereign right to dispose of his person; take away this power of life and death over himself, and he becomes the plaything of fate, the slave of other men. Rightly understood, this power of life and death is a sufficient counterpoise for all the ills of life; the same power when conferred upon another, upon his fellow-man, leads to tyranny of every kind. Man has no power whatever unless he has unlimited freedom of action. Suppose that he has been guilty of some irreparable error, from the shameful consequences of which there is no escape; a sordid nature swallows down the disgrace and survives it, the wise man drinks the hemlock and dies. Suppose that the remainder

of life is to be one constant struggle with the gout which racks our bones, or with a gnawing and disfiguring cancer, the wise man dismisses quacks, and at the proper moment bids a last farewell to the friends whom he only saddens by his presence. Or another perhaps has fallen alive into the hands of the tyrant against whom he fought. What shall he do? The oath of allegiance is tendered to him; he must either subscribe or stretch out his neck to the executioner; the fool takes the latter course, the coward subscribes, the wise man strikes a last blow for liberty—in his own heart. ‘You who are free,’ the Stoic was wont to say, ‘know then how to preserve your freedom! Find freedom from your own passions by sacrificing them to duty, freedom from the tyranny of mankind by pointing to the sword or the poison which will put you beyond their reach, freedom from the bondage of fate by determining the point beyond which you will endure it no longer, freedom of mind by shaking off the trammels of prejudice, and freedom from physical fear by learning how to subdue the gross instinct which causes so many wretches to cling to life.’

“After I had unearthed this reasoning from among a heap of ancient philosophical writings, I sought to reconcile it with Christian teaching. God has bestowed free-will upon us in order to require of us an account hereafter before the Throne of Judgment. ‘I will plead my cause there!’ I said to myself. But such thoughts as these led me to think of a life after death, and my old shaken beliefs rose up before me. Human life grows solemn when all eternity hangs upon the slightest of our decisions. When the full meaning of this thought is realized, the soul becomes conscious of something vast and mysterious within itself, by which it is drawn towards the Infinite; the aspect of all things alters strangely. From this point of view life is something infinitely great and infinitely little. The consciousness of my sins had never made me think of heaven so long as hope remained to me on earth, so long as I could find a relief for my woes in work and in the society of other men. I had meant to make the happiness of a woman’s life, to love, to be the head of a family, and in this way

my need of expiation would have been satisfied to the full. This design had been thwarted, but yet another way had remained to me,—I would devote myself henceforward to my child. But after these two efforts had failed, and scorn and death had darkened my soul forever, when all my feelings had been wounded and nothing was left to me here on earth, I raised my eyes to heaven, and beheld God.

“Yet still I tried to obtain the sanction of religion for my death. I went carefully through the Gospels, and found no passage in which suicide was forbidden; but during the reading, the divine thought of Christ, the Saviour of men, dawned in me. Certainly He had said nothing about the immortality of the soul, but He had spoken of the glorious kingdom of His Father; He had nowhere forbidden parricide, but He condemned all that was evil. The glory of His evangelists, and the proof of their divine mission, is not so much that they made laws for the world, but that they spread a new spirit abroad, and the new laws were filled with this new spirit. The very courage which a man displays in taking his own life seemed to me to be his condemnation; so long as he felt that he had within himself sufficient strength to die by his own hands, he ought to have had strength enough to continue the struggle. To refuse to suffer is a sign of weakness rather than of courage, and, moreover, was it not a sort of recusance to take leave of life in despondency, an abjuration of the Christian faith which is based upon the sublime words of Jesus Christ: ‘Blessed are they that mourn’?

“So, in any case, suicide seemed to me to be an unpardonable error, even in the man who, through a false conception of greatness of soul, takes his life a few moments before the executioner’s ax falls. In humbling himself to the death of the cross, did not Jesus Christ set for us an example of obedience to all human laws, even when carried out unjustly? The word *resignation* engraved upon the cross, so clear to the eyes of those who can read the sacred characters in which it is traced, shone for me with divine brightness.

"I still had eighty thousand francs in my possession, and at first I meant to live a remote and solitary life, to vegetate in some country district for the rest of my days; but misanthropy is no Catholic virtue, and there is a certain vanity lurking beneath the hedgehog's skin of the misanthrope. His heart does not bleed, it shrivels, and my heart bled from every vein. I thought of the discipline of the Church, the refuge that she affords to sorrowing souls, understood at last the beauty of a life of prayer in solitude, and was fully determined to 'enter religion,' in the grand old phrase. So far my intentions were firmly fixed, but I had not yet decided on the best means of carrying them out. I realized the remains of my fortune, and set forth on my journey with an almost tranquil mind. *Peace in God* was a hope that could never fail me.

"I felt drawn to the rule of Saint Bruno, and made the journey to the Grande Chartreuse on foot, absorbed in solemn thoughts. That was a memorable day. I was not prepared for the grandeur of the scenery; the workings of an unknown Power greater than that of man were visible at every step, the overhanging crags, the precipices on either hand, the stillness only broken by the voices of the mountain streams, the sternness and wildness of the landscape, relieved here and there by nature's fairest creations, pine trees that have stood for centuries and delicate rock plants at their feet, all combine to produce sober musings. There seemed to be no end to this waste solitude, shut in by its lofty mountain barriers. The idle curiosity of man could scarcely penetrate there. It would be difficult to cross this melancholy desert of Saint Bruno's with a light heart.

"I saw the Grande Chartreuse. I walked beneath the vaulted roofs of the ancient cloisters, and heard in the silence the sound of the water from the spring, falling drop by drop. I entered a cell that I might the better realize my own utter nothingness, something of the peace that my predecessor had found there seemed to pass into my soul. An inscription, which in accordance with the custom of the monastery he had written above his door, impressed and touched me; all the precepts of the life that I meant to lead

were there, summed up in three Latin words—*Fuge, late, tace.*”

Genestas bent his head as if he understood.

“My decision was made,” Benassis resumed. “The cell with its deal wainscot, the hard bed, the solitude, all appealed to my soul. The Carthusians were in the chapel, I went thither to join in their prayers, and there my resolutions vanished. I do not wish to criticise the Catholic Church, I am perfectly orthodox, I believe in its laws and in the works it prescribes. But when I heard the chanting and the prayers of those old men, dead to the world and forgotten by the world, I discerned an undercurrent of sublime egoism in the life of the cloister. This withdrawal from the world could only benefit the individual soul, and after all what was it but a protracted suicide? I do not condemn it. The Church has opened these tombs in which life is buried; no doubt they are needful for those few Christians who are absolutely useless to the world; but for me, it would be better, I thought, to live among my fellows, to devote my life of expiation to their service.

“As I returned I thought long and carefully over the various ways in which I could carry out my vow of renunciation. Already I began, in fancy, to lead the life of a common sailor, condemning myself to serve our country in the lowest ranks, and giving up all my intellectual ambitions; but though it was a life of toil and of self-abnegation, it seemed to me that I ought to do more than this. Should I not thwart the designs of God by leading such a life? If He had given me intellectual ability, was it not my duty to employ it for the good of my fellow-men? Then, besides, if I am to speak frankly, I felt within me a need of my fellow-men, an indescribable wish to help them. The round of mechanical duties and the routine tasks of the sailor afforded no scope for this desire, which is as much an outcome of my nature as the characteristic scent that a flower breathes forth.

“I was obliged to spend the night here, as I have already told you. The wretched condition of the countryside had filled me with pity, and during the night it seemed as if

these thoughts had been sent to me by God, and that thus He had revealed His will to me. I had known something of the joys that pierce the heart, the happiness and the sorrow of motherhood; I determined that henceforth my life should be filled with these, but that mine should be a wider sphere than a mother's. I would expend her care and kindness on a whole district; I would be a sister of charity, and bind the wounds of all the suffering poor in a countryside. It seemed to me that the finger of God unmistakably pointed out my destiny; and when I remembered that my first serious thoughts in youth had inclined me to the study of medicine, I resolved to settle here as a doctor. Besides, I had another reason. *For a wounded heart—shadow and silence*; so I had written in my letter, and I meant to fulfill the vow which I had made to myself.

“So I have entered into the paths of silence and submission. The *fuge, late, tace* of the Carthusian brother is my motto here, my death to the world is the life of this canton, my prayer takes the form of the active work to which I have set my hand, and which I love—the work of sowing the seeds of happiness and joy, or giving to others what I myself have not.

“I have grown so used to this life, completely out of the world and among the peasants, that I am thoroughly transformed. Even my face is altered; it has been so continually exposed to the sun, that it has grown wrinkled and weather-beaten. I have fallen into the habits of the peasants; I have assumed their dress, their ways of talking, their gait, their easy-going negligence, their utter indifference to appearances. My old acquaintances in Paris, or the she-coxcombs on whom I used to dance attendance, would be puzzled to recognize in me the man who had a certain vogue in his day, the sybarite accustomed to all the splendor, luxury, and finery of Paris. I have come to be absolutely indifferent to my surroundings, like all those who are possessed by one thought, and have only one object in view; for I have but one aim in life—to take leave of it as soon as possible. I do not want to hasten my end in any way; but some day, when illness comes, I shall lie down to die without regret.

“There, sir, you have the whole story of my life until I came here—told in all sincerity. I have not attempted to conceal any of my errors; they have been great, though others have erred as I have erred. I have suffered greatly, and I am suffering still, but I look beyond this life to a happy future which can only be reached through sorrow. And yet—for all my resignation, there are moments when my courage fails me. This very day I was almost overcome in your presence by inward anguish; you did not notice it, but——”

Genestas started in his chair.

“Yes, Captain Bluteau, you were with me at the time. Do you remember how, while we were putting little Jacques to bed, you pointed to the mattress on which Mother Colas sleeps? Well, you can imagine how painful it all was; I can never see any child without thinking of the dear child I have lost, and this little one was doomed to die! I can never see a child with indifferent eyes——”

Genestas turned pale.

“Yes, the sight of the little golden heads, the innocent beauty of children’s faces always awakens memories of my sorrows, and the old anguish returns afresh. Now and then, too, there comes the intolerable thought that so many people here should thank me for what little I can do for them, when all that I have done has been prompted by remorse. You alone, captain, know the secret of my life. If I had drawn my will to serve them from some purer source than the memory of my errors, I should be happy indeed! But then, too, there would have been nothing to tell you, and no story about myself.”

## ELEGIES

As Benassis finished his story, he was struck by the troubled expression of the officer’s face. It touched him to have been so well understood. He was almost ready

to reproach himself for having distressed his visitor. He spoke—

“But these troubles of mine, Captain Bluteau——”

“Do not call me Captain Bluteau,” cried Genestas, breaking in upon the doctor, and springing to his feet with sudden energy, a change of position that seemed to be prompted by inward dissatisfaction of some kind. “There is no such person as Captain Bluteau. . . . I am a scoundrel!”

With no little astonishment. Benassis beheld Genestas pacing to and fro in the salon, like a bumble-bee in quest of an exit from the room which he has incautiously entered.

“Then who are you, sir?” inquired Benassis.

“Ah! there now!” the officer answered, as he turned and took his stand before the doctor, though he lacked courage to look at his friend. “I have deceived you!” he went on (and there was a change in his voice). “I have acted a lie for the first time in my life, and I am well punished for it; for after this I cannot explain why I came here to play the spy upon you, confound it! Ever since I have had a glimpse of your soul, so to speak, I would far sooner have taken a box on the ear whenever I heard you call me Captain Bluteau! Perhaps you may forgive me for this subterfuge, but I shall never forgive myself; I, Pierre Joseph Genestas, who would not lie to save my life before a court-martial!”

“Are you Commandant Genestas?” cried Benassis, rising to his feet. He grasped the officer’s hand warmly, and added: “As you said but a short time ago, sir, we were friends before we knew each other. I have been very anxious to make your acquaintance, for I have often heard M. Gravier speak of you. He used to call you ‘one of Plutarch’s men.’”

“Plutarch? Nothing of the sort!” answered Genestas. “I am not worthy of you; I could thrash myself. I ought to have told you my secret in a straightforward way at the first. Yet no! It is quite as well that I wore a mask, and came here myself in search of information concerning you, for now I know that I must hold my tongue. If I



had set about this business in the right fashion it would have been painful to you, and God forbid that I should give you the slightest annoyance."

"But I do not understand you, commandant."

"Let the matter drop. I am not ill; I have spent a pleasant day, and I will go back to-morrow. Whenever you come to Grenoble, you will find that you have one more friend there, who will be your friend through thick and thin. Pierre Joseph Genestas's sword and purse are at your disposal, and I am yours to the last drop of my blood. Well, after all, your words have fallen on good soil. When I am pensioned off, I will look for some out-of-the-way little place, and be mayor of it, and try to follow your example. I have not your knowledge, but I will study at any rate."

"You are right, sir; the landowner who spends his time in convincing a commune of the folly of some mistaken notion of agriculture, confers upon his country a benefit quite as great as any that the most skillful physician can bestow. The latter lessens the sufferings of some few individuals, and the former heals the wounds of his country. But you have excited my curiosity to no common degree. Is there really something in which I can be of use to you?"

"Of use?" repeated the commandant in an altered voice. "*Mon Dieu!* I was about to ask you to do me a service which is all but impossible, M. Benassis. Just listen a moment! I have killed a good many Christians in my time, it is true; but you may kill people and keep a good heart for all that; so there are some things that I can feel and understand, rough as I look."

"But go on!"

"No, I do not want to give you any pain if I can help it."

"Oh! commandant, I can bear a great deal."

"It is a question of a child's life, sir," said the officer nervously.

Benassis suddenly knitted his brows, but by a gesture he entreated Genestas to continue.

"A child," repeated the commandant, "whose life may yet be saved by constant watchfulness and incessant care. Where could I expect to find a doctor capable of devoting

himself to a single patient? Not in a town, that much was certain. I had heard you spoken of as an excellent man, but I wished to be quite sure that this reputation was well founded. So before putting my little charge into the hands of this M. Benassis of whom people spoke so highly, I wanted to study him myself. But now——”

“Enough,” said the doctor; “so this child is yours?”

“No, no, M. Benassis. To clear up the mystery, I should have to tell you a long story, in which I do not exactly play the part of a hero; but you have given me your confidence, and I can readily give you mine.”

“One moment, commandant,” said the doctor. In answer to his summons, Jacquotte appeared at once, and her master ordered tea. “You see, commandant, at night when everyone is sleeping, I do not sleep. . . . The thought of my troubles lies heavily on me, and then I try to forget them by taking tea. It produces a sort of nervous inebriation—a kind of slumber, without which I could not live. Do you still decline to take it?”

“For my own part,” said Genestas, “I prefer your Hermitage.”

“By all means. Jacquotte,” said Benassis, turning to his housekeeper, “bring in some wine and biscuits. We will both of us have our night-cap after our separate fashions.”

“That tea must be very bad for you!” Genestas remarked.

“It brings on horrid attacks of gout, but I cannot break myself of the habit, it is too soothing; it procures for me a brief respite every night, a few moments during which life becomes less of a burden. . . . Come. I am listening; perhaps your story will efface the painful impressions left by the memories that I have just recalled.”

Genestas set down his empty glass upon the chimney-piece. “After the Retreat from Moscow,” he said, “my regiment was stationed to recruit for a while in a little town in Poland. We were quartered there, in fact, till the Emperor returned, and we bought up horses at long prices. So far so good. I ought to say that I had a friend in those days. More than once during the Retreat I had owed my life to him. He was a quartermaster, Renard by

name; we could not but be like brothers (military discipline apart) after what he had done for me. They billeted us on the same house, a sort of shanty, a rat-hole of a place where a whole family lived, though you would not have thought there was room to stable a horse. This particular hovel belonged to some Jews who carried on their six-and-thirty trades in it. The frost had not so stiffened the old father Jew's fingers but that he could count gold fast enough; he had thriven uncommonly during our reverses. That sort of gentry lives in squalor and dies in gold.

"There were cellars underneath (lined with wood of course, the whole house was built of wood); they had stowed their children away down there, and one more particularly, a girl of seventeen, as handsome as a Jewess can be when she keeps herself tidy and has not fair hair. She was as white as snow, she had eyes like velvet, and dark lashes to them like rats' tails; her hair was so thick and glossy that it made you long to stroke it. She was perfection, and nothing less! I was the first to discover this curious arrangement. I was walking up and down outside one evening, smoking my pipe, after they thought I had gone to bed. The children came in helter-skelter, tumbling over one another like so many puppies. It was fun to watch them. Then they had supper with their father and mother. I strained my eyes to see the young Jewess through the clouds of smoke that her father blew from his pipe; she looked like a new gold piece among a lot of copper coins.

"I had never reflected about love, my dear Benassis, I had never had time; but now at the sight of this young girl I lost my heart and head and everything else at once, and then it was plain to me that I had never been in love before. I was hard hit, and over head and ears in love. There I stayed smoking my pipe, absorbed in watching the Jewess until she blew out the candle and went to bed. I could not close my eyes. The whole night long I walked up and down the street smoking my pipe and refilling it from time to time. I had never felt like that before, and for the first and last time in my life I thought of marrying.

"At daybreak I saddled my horse and rode out into the

country, to clear my head. I kept him at a trot for two mortal hours, and all but foundered the animal before I noticed it——”

Genestas stopped short, looked at his new friend uneasily, and said, “You must excuse me, Benassis, I am no orator; things come out just as they turn up in my mind. In a room full of fine folk I should feel awkward, but here in the country with you——”

“Go on,” said the doctor

“When I came back to my room I found Renard finely flustered. He thought I had fallen in a duel. He was cleaning his pistols, his head full of schemes for fastening a quarrel on anyone who should have turned me off into the dark. . . . Oh! that was just the fellow’s way! I confided my story to Renard, showed him the kennel where the children were; and, as my comrade understood the jargon that those heathens talked, I begged him to help me to lay my proposals before her father and mother, and to try to arrange some kind of communication between me and Judith. Judith they called her. In short, sir, for a fortnight the Jew and his wife so arranged matters that we supped every night with Judith, and for a fortnight I was the happiest of men. You understand and you know how it was, so I shall not wear out your patience; still, if you do not smoke, you cannot imagine how pleasant it was to smoke a pipe at one’s ease with Renard and the girl’s father and one’s princess there before one’s eyes. Oh! yes, it was very pleasant!

“But I ought to tell you that Renard was a Parisian, and dependent on his father, a wholesale grocer, who had educated his son with a view to making a notary of him; so Renard had come by a certain amount of book learning before he had been drawn by the conscription and had to bid his desk good-by. Add to this that he was the kind of man who looks well in a uniform, with a face like a girl’s, and a thorough knowledge of the art of wheedling people. It was *he* whom Judith loved; she cared about as much for me as a horse cares for roast fowls. Whilst I was in the seventh heaven, soaring above the clouds at the bare sight of Judith, my friend Renard (who, as you see, fairly deserved his name)

was making a way for himself underground. The traitor arrived at an understanding with the girl, and to such good purpose, that they were married forthwith after the custom of her country, without waiting for permission, which would have been too long in coming. He promised her, however, that if it should happen that the validity of this marriage was afterwards called in question, they were to be married again according to French law. As a matter of fact, as soon as she reached France, Mme. Renard became Mlle. Judith once more.

"If I had known all this, I would have killed Renard then and there, without giving him time to draw another breath; but the father, the mother, the girl herself, and the quartermaster were all in the plot like thieves in a fair. While I was smoking my pipe, and worshiping Judith as if she had been one of the saints above, the worthy Renard was arranging to meet her, and managing this piece of business very cleverly under my very eyes.

"You are the only person to whom I have told this story. A disgraceful thing, I call it. I have always asked myself how it is that a man who would die of shame if he took a gold coin that did not belong to him, does not scruple to rob a friend of happiness and life and the woman he loves. My birds, in fact, were married and happy; and there was I, every evening at supper, moonstruck, gazing at Judith, responding like some fellow in a farce to the looks she threw at me in order to throw dust in my eyes. They have paid uncommonly dear for all this deceit, as you will certainly think. On my conscience, God pays more attention to what goes on in this world than some of us imagine.

"Down come the Russians upon us, the country is overrun, and the campaign of 1813 begins in earnest. One fine morning comes an order; we are to be on the battlefield of Lützen by a stated hour. The Emperor knew quite well what he was about when he ordered us to start at once. The Russians had turned our flank. Our colonel must needs get himself into a scrape, by choosing that moment to take leave of a Polish lady who lived outside the town, a quarter of a mile away; the Cossack advanced guard just caught him

nicely, him and his picket. There was scarcely time to spring into our saddles and draw up before the town so as to engage in a cavalry skirmish. We must check the Russian advance if we meant to draw off during the night. Again and again we charged, and for three hours we did wonders. Under cover of the fighting the baggage and artillery set out. We had a park of artillery and great stores of powder, of which the Emperor stood in desperate need; they must reach him at all costs.

“Our resistance deceived the Russians, who thought at first that we were supported by an army corps; but before very long they learned their error from their scouts, and knew that they had only a single regiment of cavalry to deal with and the invalided foot soldiers in the dépôt. On finding it out, sir, they made a murderous onslaught on us towards evening; the action was so hot that a good few of us were left on the field. We were completely surrounded. I was by Renard’s side in the front rank, and I saw how my friend fought and charged like a demon; he was thinking of his wife. Thanks to him, we managed to regain the town, which our invalids had put more or less in a state of defense, but it was pitiful to see it. We were the last to return—he and I. A body of Cossacks appeared in our way, and on this we rode in hot haste. One of the savages was about to run me through with a lance, when Renard, catching a sight of his maneuver, thrust his horse between us to turn aside the blow; his poor brute, a fine animal it was, upon my word, received the lance thrust and fell, bringing down both Renard and the Cossack with him. I killed the Cossack, seized Renard by the arm, and laid him crosswise before me on my horse like a sack of wheat.

“‘Good-by, captain,’ Renard said; ‘it is all over with me.’

“‘Not yet,’ I answered; ‘I must have a look at you.’ We had reached the town by that time; I dismounted, and propped him up on a little straw by the corner of a house. A wound in the head had laid open the brain, and yet he spoke! . . . Oh! he was a brave man.

“‘We are quits,’ he said. ‘I have given you my life,

and I had taken Judith from you. Take care of her and of her child, if she has one. And not only so—you must marry her.’

“I left him then and there, sir, like a dog; when the first fury of anger left me, and I went back again—he was dead. The Cossacks had set fire to the town, and the thought of Judith then came to my mind. I went in search of her, took her up behind me in the saddle, and, thanks to my swift horse, caught up the regiment which was effecting its retreat. As for the Jew and his family, there was not one of them left, they had all disappeared like rats; there was no one but Judith in the house, waiting alone there for Renard. At first, as you can understand, I told her not a word of all that had happened.

“So it befell that all through the disastrous campaign of 1813 I had a woman to look after, to find quarters for her, and to see that she was comfortable. She scarcely knew, I think, the straits to which we were reduced. I was always careful to keep her ten leagues ahead of us as we drew back towards France. Her boy was born while we were fighting at Hanau. I was wounded in the engagement, and only rejoined Judith at Strasburg; then I returned to Paris, for, unluckily, I was laid up all through the campaign in France. If it had not been for that wretched mishap, I should have entered the Grenadier Guards, and then the Emperor would have promoted me. As it was, sir, I had three broken ribs and another man’s wife and child to support! My pay, as you can imagine, was not exactly the wealth of the Indies. Renard’s father, the toothless old shark, would have nothing to say to his daughter-in-law; and the old father Jew had made off. Judith was fretting herself to death. She cried one morning while she was dressing my wound.

“‘Judith,’ I said, ‘your child has nothing in this world——’

“‘Neither have I!’ she said.

“‘Pshaw!’ I answered, ‘we will send for all the necessary papers, I will marry you; and as for his child, I will look on him as mine——’ I could not say any more.

“Ah, my dear sir, what would not one do for the look

by which Judith thanked me—a look of thanks from dying eyes; I saw clearly that I had loved, and should love her always, and from that day her child found a place in my heart. She died, poor woman, while the father and mother Jews and the papers were on the way. The day before she died, she found strength enough to rise and dress herself for her wedding, to go through all the usual performance, and set her name to their pack of papers; then, when her child had a name and a father, she went back to her bed again; I kissed her hands and her forehead, and she died.

“That was my wedding. Two days later, when I had bought the few feet of earth in which the poor girl is laid, I found myself the father of an orphan child. I put him out to nurse during the campaign of 1815. Ever since that time, without letting anyone know my story, which did not sound very well, I have looked after the little rogue as if he were my own child. I don’t know what became of his grandfather; he is wandering about, a ruined man, somewhere or other between Russia and Persia. The chances are that he may make a fortune some day, for he seemed to understand the trade in precious stones.

“I sent the child to school. I wanted him to take a good place at the *École Polytechnique* and to see him graduate there with credit, so of late I have had him drilled in mathematics to such good purpose that the poor little soul has been knocked up by it. He has a delicate chest. By all I can make out from the doctors in Paris, there would be some hope for him still if he were allowed to run wild among the hills, if he was properly cared for, and constantly looked after by somebody who was willing to undertake the task. So I thought of you, and I came here to take stock of your ideas and your ways of life. After what you have told me, I could not possibly cause you pain in this way, for we are good friends already.”

“Commandant,” said Benassis after a moment’s pause, “bring Judith’s child here to me. It is doubtless God’s will to submit me to this final trial, and I will endure it. I will offer up these sufferings to God, whose Son died upon



the Cross. Besides, your story has awakened tender feelings; does not that augur well for me?"

Genestas took both of Benassis's hands and pressed them warmly, unable to check the tears that filled his eyes and coursed down his sunburnt face.

"Let us keep silence with regard to all this," he said.

"Yes, commandant. You are not drinking?"

"I am not thirsty," Genestas answered. "I am a perfect fool!"

"Well, when will you bring him to me?"

"Why, to-morrow, if you will let me. He has been at Grenoble these two days."

"Good! Set out to-morrow morning and come back again. I shall wait for you in La Fosseuse's cottage, and we will all four of us breakfast there together."

"Agreed," said Genestas, and the two friends as they went upstairs bade each other good-night. When they reached the landing that lay between their rooms, Genestas set down his candle on the window ledge and turned towards Benassis.

"*Tonnerre de Dieu!*" he said, with outspoken enthusiasm: "I cannot let you go without telling you that you are the third among christened men to make me understand that there is Something up there," and he pointed to the sky.

The doctor's answer was a smile full of sadness and a cordial grasp of the hand that Genestas held out to him.

Before daybreak next morning Commandant Genestas was on his way. On his return, it was noon before he reached the spot on the highroad between Grenoble and the little town, where the pathway turned that led to La Fosseuse's cottage. He was seated in one of the light open cars with four wheels, drawn by one horse, that are in use everywhere on the roads in these hilly districts. Genestas's companion was a thin, delicate-looking lad, apparently about twelve years of age, though in reality he was in his sixteenth year. Before alighting, the officer looked round about him in several directions in search of a peasant who would take the carriage back to Benassis's house. It was impossible to drive to La Fosseuse's cottage, the pathway was too narrow. The park-

keeper happened to appear upon the scene, and helped Genestas out of his difficulty, so that the officer and his adopted son were at liberty to follow the mountain footpath that led to the trysting-place.

"Would you not enjoy spending a year in running about in this lovely country, Adrien? Learning to hunt and to ride a horse, instead of growing pale over your books? Stay! look there!"

Adrien obediently glanced over the valley with languid indifference; like all lads of his age, he cared nothing for the beauty of natural scenery; so he only said, "You are very kind, father," without checking his walk.

The invalid listlessness of this answer went to Genestas's heart; he said no more to his son, and they reached La Fosseuse's house in silence.

"You are punctual, commandant!" cried Benassis, rising from the wooden bench where he was sitting.

But at the sight of Adrien he sat down again, and seemed for a while to be lost in thought. In a leisurely fashion he scanned the lad's sallow, weary face, not without admiring its delicate oval outlines, one of the most noticeable characteristics of a noble head. The lad was the living image of his mother. He had her olive complexion, beautiful black eyes with a sad and thoughtful expression in them, long hair, a head too energetic for the fragile body; all the peculiar beauty of the Polish Jewess had been transmitted to her son.

"Do you sleep soundly, my little man?" Benassis asked him.

"Yes, sir."

"Let me see your knees; turn back your trousers."

Adrien reddened, unfastened his garters, and showed his knee to the doctor, who felt it carefully over.

"Good. Now speak; shout, shout as loud as you can." Adrien obeyed.

"That will do. Now give me your hands."

The lad held them out; white, soft, and blue-veined hands, like those of a woman.

"Where were you at school in Paris?"

"At Saint-Louis."

"Did your master read his breviary during the night?"

"Yes, sir."

"So you did not go straight off to sleep?"

As Adrien made no answer to this, Genestas spoke. "The master is a worthy priest; he advised me to take my little rascal away on the score of his health," he told the doctor.

"Well," answered Benassis, with a clear, penetrating gaze into Adrien's frightened eyes, "there is a good chance. Oh, we shall make a man of him yet. We will live together like a pair of comrades, my boy! We will keep early hours. I mean to show this boy of yours how to ride a horse, commandant. He shall be put on a milk diet for a month or two, so as to get his digestion into order again, and then I will take out a shooting license for him, and put him in Butifer's hands, and the two of them shall have some chamois-hunting. Give your son four or five months of outdoor life, and you will not know him again, commandant! How delighted Butifer will be! I know the fellow; he will take you over into Switzerland, my young friend; haul you over the Alpine passes and up the mountain peaks, and add six inches to your height in six months; he will put some color into your cheeks and brace your nerves, and make you forget all these bad ways that you have fallen into at school. And after that you can go back to your work; and you will be a man some of these days. Butifer is an honest young fellow. We can trust him with the money necessary for traveling expenses and your hunting expeditions. The responsibility will keep him steady for six months, and that will be a very good thing for him."

Genestas's face brightened more and more at every word the doctor spoke.

"Now, let us go in to breakfast. La Fosseuse is very anxious to see you," said Benassis, giving Adrien a gentle tap on the cheek.

Genestas took the doctor's arm and drew him a little aside. "Then he is not consumptive after all?" he asked.

"No more than you or I."

"Then what is the matter with him?"

"Pshaw!" answered Benassis; "he is a little run down, that is all."

La Fosseuse appeared on the threshold of the door; and Genestas noticed, not without surprise, her simple but coquettish costume. This was not the peasant girl of yesterday evening, but a graceful and well-dressed Parisian woman, against whose glances he felt that he was not proof. The soldier turned his eyes on the table, which was made of walnut wood. There was no tablecloth, but the surface might have been varnished, it was so well rubbed and polished. Eggs, butter, a rice pudding, and fragrant wild strawberries had been set out, and the poor child had put flowers everywhere about the room; evidently it was a great day for her. At the sight of all this, the commandant could not help looking enviously at the little house and the greensward about it, and watched the peasant girl with an air that expressed both his doubts and his hopes. Then his eyes fell on Adrien, with whom La Fosseuse was deliberately busying herself, and handing him the eggs.

"Now, commandant," said Benassis, "you know the terms on which you are receiving hospitality. You must tell La Fosseuse 'something about the army.'"

"But let the gentleman first have his breakfast in peace, and then, after he has taken a cup of coffee——"

"By all means, I shall be very glad," answered the commandant; "but it must be upon one condition, you will tell us the story of some adventure in your past life, will you not, mademoiselle?"

"Why, nothing worth telling has ever happened to me, sir," she answered, as her color rose. "Will you take a little more rice pudding?" she added, as she saw that Adrien's plate was empty.

"If you please, mademoiselle."

"The pudding is delicious," said Genestas.

"Then what will you say to her coffee and cream?" cried Benassis.

"I would rather hear our pretty hostess talk."

"You did not put that nicely, Genestas," said Benassis.

He took La Fosseuse's hand in his and pressed it as he went on: "Listen, my child; there is a kind heart hidden away beneath that officer's stern exterior, and you can talk freely with him. We do not want to press you to talk, do not tell us anything unless you like; but if ever you can be listened to and understood, poor little one, it will be by the three who are with you now at this moment. Tell us all about your love affairs in the old days, that will not admit us into any of the real secrets of your heart."

"Here is Mariette with the coffee," she answered, "and as soon as you are all served, I will tell about my 'love affairs' very willingly. But M. le Commandant will not forget his promise?" she added, challenging the officer with a shy glance.

"That would be impossible, mademoiselle," Genestas answered respectfully.

"When I was sixteen years old," La Fosseuse began, "I had to beg my bread on the roadside in Savoy, though my health was very bad. I used to sleep at Échelles, in a manger full of straw. The innkeeper who gave me shelter was kind, but his wife could not abide me, and was always saying hard things. I used to feel very miserable; for though I was a beggar, I was not a naughty child; I used to say my prayers every night and morning, I never stole anything, and I did as Heaven bade me in begging for my living, for there was nothing that I could turn my hands to, and I was really unfit for work—quite unable to handle a hoe or to wind spools of cotton.

"Well, they drove me away from the inn at last; a dog was the cause of it all. I had neither father nor mother nor friends. I had met with no one, ever since I was born, whose eyes had any kindness in them for me. Morin, the old woman who had brought me up, was dead. She had been very good to me, but I cannot remember that she ever petted me much; besides, she worked out in the fields like a man, poor thing; and if she fondled me at times, she also used to rap my fingers with the spoon if I ate the soup too fast out of the porringer we had between us. Poor old woman, never a day passes but I remember her in my prayers!

If it might please God to let her live a happier life up there than she did here below! And, above all things, if she might only lie a little softer there, for she was always grumbling about the pallet-bed that we both used to sleep upon. You could not possibly imagine how it hurts one's soul to be repulsed by everyone, to receive nothing but hard words and looks that cut you to the heart, just as if they were so many stabs of a knife. I have known poor old people who were so used to these things that they did not mind them a bit, but I was not born for that sort of life. A 'No' always made me cry. Every evening I came back again more unhappy than ever, and only felt comforted when I had said my prayers. In all God's world, in fact, there was not a soul to care for me, no one to whom I could pour out my heart. My only friend was the blue sky. I have always been happy when there was a cloudless sky above my head. I used to lie and watch the weather from some nook among the crags when the wind had swept the clouds away. At such times I used to dream that I was a great lady. I used to gaze into the sky till I felt myself bathed in the blue; I lived up there in thought, rising higher and higher yet, till my troubles weighed on me no more, and there was nothing but gladness left.

"But to return to my 'love affairs.' I must tell you that the innkeeper's spaniel had a dear little puppy, just as sensible as a human being; he was quite white, with black spots on his paws, a cherub of a puppy! I can see him yet. Poor little fellow, he was the only creature who ever gave me a friendly look in those days; I kept all my tit-bits for him. He knew me, and came to look for me every evening. How he used to spring up at me! And he would bite my feet, he was not ashamed of my poverty; there was something so grateful and so kind in his eyes that it brought tears into mine to see it. 'That is the one living creature that really cares for me!' I used to say. He slept at my feet that winter. It hurt me so much to see him beaten, that I broke him of the habit of going into houses to steal bones, and he was quite contented with my crusts. When I was unhappy, he used to come and stand in front of me,

and look into my eyes; it was just as if he said, 'So you are sad, my poor Fosseuse?'

"If a traveler threw me some halfpence, he would pick them up out of the dust and bring them to me, clever little spaniel that he was! I was less miserable so long as I had that friend. Every day I put away a few halfpence, for I wanted to get fifteen francs together, so that I might buy him of Père Manseau. One day his wife saw that the dog was fond of me, so she herself took a sudden violent fancy to him. The dog, mind you, could not bear her. Oh, animals know people by instinct! If you really care for them, they find it out in a moment. I had a gold coin, a twenty-franc piece, sewed into the band of my skirt; so I spoke to M. Manseau: 'Dear sir, I meant to offer you my year's savings for your dog; but now your wife has a mind to keep him, although she cares very little about him, and rather than that, will you sell him to me for twenty francs? Look, I have the money here.'

"'No, no, little woman,' he said; 'put up your twenty francs. Heaven forbid that I should take their money from the poor! Keep the dog; and if my wife makes a fuss about it, you must go away.'

"His wife made a terrible to-do about the dog. Ah! *mon Dieu!* anyone might have thought the house was on fire! You never would guess the notion that next came into her head. She saw that the little fellow looked on me as his mistress, and that she could only have him against his will, so she had him poisoned; and my poor spaniel died in my arms. . . . I cried over him as if he had been my child, and buried him under a pine tree. You do not know all that I laid in that grave. As I sat there beside it, I told myself that henceforward I should always be alone in the world; that I had nothing left to hope for; that I should be again as I had been before, a poor lonely girl; that I should never more see a friendly light in any eyes. I stayed out there all through the night, praying God to have pity on me. When I went back to the highroad I saw a poor little child, about ten years old, who had no hands.

"'God has heard me,' I thought. I had prayed that

night as I had never prayed before 'I will take care of the poor little one; we will beg together, and I will be a mother to him. Two of us ought to do better than one; perhaps I shall have more courage for him than I have for myself.'

"At first the little boy seemed to be quite happy, and, indeed, he would have been hard to please if he had not been content. I did everything that he wanted, and gave him the best of all that I had; I was his slave in fact, and he tyrannized over me, but that was nicer than being alone, I used to think! Pshaw! no sooner did the little good-for-nothing know that I carried a twenty-franc piece sewed into my skirt-band than he cut the stitches, and stole my gold coin, the price of my poor spaniel! I had meant to have Masses said with it. . . . A child without hands, too! Oh, it makes one shudder! Somehow that theft took all the heart out of me. It seemed as if I was to love nothing but it should come to some wretched end.

"One day at Écheltes, I watched a fine carriage coming slowly up the hillside. There was a young lady, as beautiful as the Virgin Mary, in the carriage, and a young man, who looked like the young lady. 'Just look,' he said; 'there is a pretty girl!' and he flung a silver coin to me.

"No one but you, M. Benassis, could understand how pleased I was with the compliment, the first that I had ever had; but, indeed, the gentleman ought not to have thrown the money to me. I was all in a flutter; I knew of a short cut, a footpath among the rocks, and started at once to run, so that I reached the summit of the Écheltes long before the carriage, which was coming up very slowly. I saw the young man again; he was quite surprised to find me there; and as for me, I was so pleased that my heart seemed to be throbbing in my throat. Some kind of instinct drew me towards him. After he had recognized me, I went on my way again; I felt quite sure that he and the young lady with him would leave the carriage to see the waterfall at Couz, and so they did. When they had alighted, they saw me once more, under the walnut trees by the wayside. They asked me many questions, and seemed to take an interest



in what I told them about myself. In all my life I had never heard such pleasant voices as they had, that handsome young man and his sister, for she was his sister I am sure. I thought about them for a whole year afterwards, and kept on hoping that they would come back. I would have given two years of my life only to see that traveler again, he looked so nice. Until I knew M. Benassis these were the greatest events of my life. Although my mistress turned me away for trying on that horrid ball-dress of hers, I was sorry for her, and I have forgiven her; for, candidly, if you will give me leave to say so, I thought myself the better woman of the two, countess though she was."

"Well," said Genestas, after a moment's pause, "you see that Providence has kept a friendly eye on you, you are in clover here."

At these words La Fosseuse looked at Benassis with eyes full of gratitude.

"Would that I were rich!" came from Genestas. The officer's exclamation was followed by profound silence.

"You owe me a story," said La Fosseuse at last, in coaxing tones.

"I will tell it at once," answered Genestas. "On the evening before the battle of Friedland," he went on, after a moment, "I had been sent with a dispatch to General Davoust's quarters, and I was on the way back to my own, when at a turn in the road I found myself face to face with the Emperor. Napoleon gave me a look.

"'You are Captain Genestas, are you not?' he said.

"'Yes, your Majesty.'

"'You were out in Egypt?'

"'Yes, your Majesty.'

"'You had better not keep to the road you are on,' he said; 'turn to the left, you will reach your division sooner that way.'

"That was what the Emperor said, but you would never imagine how kindly he said it; and he had so many irons in the first just then, for he was riding about surveying the position of the field. I am telling you this story to show you what a memory he had, and so that you may know

that he knew my face. I took the oath in 1815. But for that mistake, perhaps I might have been a colonel to-day; I never meant to betray the Bourbons, France must be defended, and that was all I thought about. I was a major in the Grenadiers of the Imperial Guard; and although my wound still gave me trouble, I swung a saber in the battle of Waterloo. When it was all over, and Napoleon returned to Paris, I went too; then when he reached Rochefort, I followed him against his orders: it was some sort of comfort to watch over him and to see that no mishap befell him on the way. So when he was walking along the beach he turned and saw me on duty ten paces from him.

“‘Well, Genestas,’ he said, as he came towards me, ‘so we are not yet dead, either of us?’”

“It cut me to the heart to hear him say that. If you had heard him, you would have shuddered from head to foot, as I did. He pointed to the villainous English vessel that was keeping the entrance to the harbor. ‘When I see *that*,’ he said, ‘and think of my Guard, I wish that I had perished in that torrent of blood.’”

“Yes,” said Genestas, looking at the doctor and at La Fosseuse, “those were his very words.”

“‘The generals who counseled you not to charge with the Guard, and who hurried you into your traveling carriage, were no true friends of yours,’ I said.

“‘Come with me,’ he cried eagerly, ‘the game is not ended yet.’”

“‘I would gladly go with your Majesty, but I am not free; I have a motherless child on my hands just now.’”

“And so it happened that Adrien over there prevented me from going to St. Helena.

“‘Stay,’ he said, ‘I have never given you anything. You are not one of those who fill one hand and then hold out the other. Here is the snuff-box that I have used through this last campaign. And stay on in France; after all, brave men are wanted there! Remain in the service, and keep me in remembrance. Of all my army in Egypt, you are the last that I have seen still on his legs in France.’ And he gave me a little snuff-box.

“‘Have “*Honneur et patrie*” engraved on it,’ he said; ‘the history of our two last campaigns is summed up in those three words.’

“Then those who were going out with him came up, and I spent the rest of the morning with them. The Emperor walked to and fro along the beach; there was not a sign of agitation about him, though he frowned from time to time. At noon, it was considered hopeless for him to attempt to escape by sea. The English had found out that he was at Rochefort; he must either give himself up to them, or cross the breadth of France again. We were wretchedly anxious; the minutes seemed like hours! On the one hand there were the Bourbons, who would have shot Napoleon if he had fallen into their clutches; and on the other, the English, a dishonored race, they covered themselves with shame by flinging a foe who asked for hospitality away on a desert rock, that is a stain which they will never wash away. Whilst we were anxiously debating, someone or other among his suite presented a sailor to him, a Lieutenant Doret, who had a scheme for reaching America to lay before him. As a matter of fact, a brig from the States and a merchant vessel were lying in the harbor.”

“‘But how could you set about it, captain?’ the Emperor asked him.

“‘You will be on board the merchant vessel, sire,’ the man answered. ‘I will run up the white flag and man the brig with a few devoted followers. We will tackle the English vessel, set fire to her, and board her, and you will get clear away.’

“‘We will go with you!’ I cried to the captain. But Napoleon looked at us and said, ‘Captain Doret, keep yourself for France.’

“It was the only time I ever saw Napoleon show any emotion. With a wave of his hand to us he went in again. I watched him go on board the English vessel, and then I went away. It was all over with him, and he knew it. There was a traitor in the harbor, who by means of signals gave warning to the Emperor’s enemies of his presence. Then Napoleon fell back on a last resource; he did as he had been

wont to do on the battlefield, he went to his foes instead of letting them come to him. Talk of troubles! No words could ever make you understand the misery of those who loved him for his own sake."

"But where is his snuff-box?" asked La Fosseuse.

"It is in a box at Grenoble," the commandant replied.

"I will go over to see it if you will let me. To think that you have something in your possession that his fingers have touched! . . . Had he a well-shaped hand?"

"Very."

"Can it be true that he is dead? Come, tell me the real truth?"

"Yes, my dear child, he is dead; there is no doubt about it."

"I was such a little girl in 1815. I was not tall enough to see anything but his hat, and even so I was nearly crushed to death in the crowd at Grenoble."

"Your coffee and cream is very nice indeed," said Genestas. "Well, Adrien, how do you like this country? Will you come here to see mademoiselle?"

The boy made no answer; he seemed afraid to look at La Fosseuse. Benassis never took his eyes off Adrien; he appeared to be reading the lad's very soul.

"Of course he will come to see her," said Benassis. "But let us go home again, I have a pretty long round to make, and I shall want a horse. I dare say you and Jacquotte will manage to get on together whilst I am away."

"Will you not come with us?" said Genestas to La Fosseuse.

"Willingly," she answered; "I have a lot of things to take over for Mme. Jacquotte."

They started out for the doctor's house. Her visitors had raised La Fosseuse's spirits; she led the way along narrow tracks, through the loneliest parts of the hills.

"You have told us nothing about yourself, M. l'Officier," she said. "I should have liked to hear you tell us about some adventure in the wars. I liked what you told us about Napoleon very much, but it made me feel sad. . . . If you would be so very kind——"

"Quite right!" Benassis exclaimed. "You ought to tell us about some thrilling adventure during our walk. Come, now, something really interesting like that business of the beam in the Beresina!"

"So few of my recollections are worth telling," said Genestas. "Some people come in for all kinds of adventures, but I have never managed to be the hero of any story. Oh! stop a bit though, a funny thing did once happen to me. I was with the Grand Army in 1805, and so, of course, I was at Austerlitz. There was a good deal of skirmishing just before Ulm surrendered, which kept the cavalry pretty fully occupied. Moreover, we were under the command of Murat, who never let the grass grow under his feet.

"I was still only a sub-lieutenant in those days. It was just at the opening of the campaign, and after one of these affairs, that we took possession of a district in which there were a good many fine estates; so it fell out that one evening my regiment bivouacked in a park belonging to a handsome château where a countess lived, a young and pretty woman she was. Of course, I meant to lodge in the house, and I hurried there to put a stop to pillage of any sort. I came into the salon just as my quartermaster was pointing his carbine at the countess, his brutal way of asking for what she certainly could not give the ugly scoundrel. I struck up his carbine with my sword, the bullet went through a looking-glass on the wall, then I dealt my gentleman a back-handed blow that stretched him on the floor. The sound of the shot and the cries of the countess fetched all her people on the scene, and it was my turn to be in danger.

"'Stop!' she cried in German (for they were going to run me through the body), 'this officer has saved my life!'

"They drew back at that. The lady gave me her handkerchief (a fine embroidered handkerchief, which I have yet), telling me that her house would always be open to me, and that I should always find a sister and a devoted friend in her, if at any time I should be in any sort of trouble. In short, she did not know how to make enough of me. She was as fair as a wedding morning and as charming as a kitten. We had dinner together. Next day I was dis-

tractedly in love, but next day I had to be in my place at Güntzburg, or wherever it was. There was no help for it, I had to turn out. and started off with my handkerchief.

"Well, we gave them battle, and all the time I kept on saying to myself, 'I wish a bullet would come my way! *Mon Dieu!* they are flying thick enough!'

"I had no wish for a ball in the thigh, for I should have had to stop where I was in that case, and there would have been no going back to the château, but I was not particular; a nice wound in the arm I should have liked best, so that I might be nursed and made much of by the princess. I flung myself on the enemy, like mad; but I had no sort of luck, and came out of the action safe and sound. We must march, and there was an end of it; I never saw the countess again, and there is the whole story."

By this time they had reached Benassis's house; the doctor mounted his horse at once and disappeared. Genestas recommended his son to Jacquotte's care, so the doctor on his return found that she had taken Adrien completely under her wing, and had installed him in M. Gravier's celebrated room. With no small astonishment, she heard her master's order to put up a simple camp-bed in his own room, for that the lad was to sleep there, and this in such an authoritative tone, that for once in her life Jacquotte found not a single word to say.

After dinner the commandant went back to Grenoble. Benassis's reiterated assurance that the lad would soon be restored to health had taken a weight off his mind.

Eight months later, in the earliest days of the following December, Genestas was appointed to be lieutenant-colonel of a regiment stationed at Poitiers. He was just thinking of writing to Benassis to tell him of the journey he was about to take, when a letter came from the doctor. His friend told him that Adrien was once more in sound health.

"The boy has grown strong and tall," he said; "and he is wonderfully well. He has profited by Butifer's instruction since you saw him last, and is now as good a

shot as our smuggler himself. He has grown brisk and active too; he is a good walker, and rides well; he is not in the least like the lad of sixteen who looked like a boy of twelve eight months ago; anyone might think he was twenty years old. There is an air of self-reliance and independence about him. In fact, he is a man now, and you must begin to think about his future at once."

"I shall go over to Benassis to-morrow, of course," said Genestas to himself, "and I will see what he says before I make up my mind what to do with that fellow," and with that he went to a farewell dinner given to him by his brother officers. He would be leaving Grenoble now in a very few days.

As the lieutenant-colonel returned after the dinner, his servant handed him a letter. It had been brought by a messenger, he said, who had waited a long while for an answer.

Genestas recognized Adrien's handwriting although his head was swimming after the toasts that had been drunk in his honor; probably, he thought, the letter merely contained a request to gratify some boyish whim, so he left it unopened on the table. The next morning, when the fumes of champagne had passed off, he took it up and began to read.

"My dear father——"

"Oh! you young rogue," was his comment, "you know how to coax whenever you want something."

"Our dear M. Benassis is dead——"

The letter dropped from Genestas's hands; it was some time before he could read any more.

"Everyone is in consternation. The trouble is all the greater because it came as a sudden shock. It was so unexpected. M. Benassis seemed perfectly well the day before; there was not a sign of ill-health about him. Only the day before yesterday he went to see all his patients, even those who lived farthest away; it was as if he had known what was going to happen; and he spoke to everyone whom he met, saying, 'Good-by, my friends,' each time. Towards five o'clock he came back just as usual to have dinner with

me. He was tired; Jacquotte noticed the purple flush on his face, but the weather was so very cold that she would not get ready a warm foot-bath for him, as she usually did when she saw that the blood had gone to his head. So she has been wailing, poor thing, through her tears for these two days past, 'If I had *only* given him a foot-bath, he would be living now!'

"M. Benassis was hungry; he made a good dinner. I thought he was in higher spirits than usual; we both of us laughed a great deal, I had never seen him laugh so much before. After dinner, towards seven o'clock, a man came with a message from Saint-Laurent du Pont; it was a serious case, and M. Benassis was urgently needed. He said to me, 'I shall have to go, though I never care to set out on horseback when I have hardly digested my dinner, more especially when it is as cold as this. It is enough to kill a man!'

"For all that, he went. At nine o'clock the postman, Goguelat, brought a letter for M. Benassis. Jacquotte was tired out, for it was her washing-day. She gave me the letter and went off to bed. She begged me to keep a good fire in our bedroom, and to have some tea ready for M. Benassis when he came in, for I am still sleeping in the little cot-bed in his room. I raked out the fire in the salon, and went upstairs to wait for my good friend. I looked at the letter, out of curiosity, before I laid it on the chimney-piece, and noticed the handwriting and the postmark. It came from Paris, and I think it was a lady's hand. I am telling you about it because of things that happened afterwards.

"About ten o'clock, I heard the horse returning, and M. Benassis's voice. He said to Nicolle, 'It is cold enough to-night to bring the wolves out. I do not feel at all well.' Nicolle said, 'Shall I go up and wake Jacquotte?' And M. Benassis answered, 'Oh! no, no,' and came upstairs.

"I said, 'I have your tea here, all ready for you,' and he smiled at me in the way that you know, and said, 'Thank you, Adrien.' That was his last smile. In a moment he



began to take off his cravat, as though he could not breathe. 'How hot it is in here!' he said, and flung himself down in an armchair. 'A letter has come for you, my good friend,' I said; 'here it is'; and I gave him the letter. He took it up and glanced at the handwriting. 'Ah! *mon Dieu!*' he exclaimed, 'perhaps she is free at last!' Then his head sank back, and his hands shook. After a little while he set the lamp on the table and opened the letter. There was something so alarming in the cry he had given that I watched him while he read, and saw that his face was flushed, and there were tears in his eyes. Then quite suddenly he fell, head forwards. I tried to raise him, and saw how purple his face was.

"'It is all over with me,' he said, stammering; it was terrible to see how he struggled to rise. 'I must be bled; bleed me!' he cried, clutching my hand. . . . 'Adrien,' he said again, 'burn this letter!' He gave it to me, and I threw it on the fire. I called for Jacquotte and Nicolle. Jacquotte did not hear me, but Nicolle did, and came hurrying upstairs; he helped me to lay M. Benassis on my little bed. Our dear friend could not hear us any longer when we spoke to him, and although his eyes were open, he did not see anything. Nicolle galloped off at once to fetch the surgeon, M. Bordier, and in this way spread alarm through the town. It was all astir in a moment. M. Janvier, M. Dufau, and all the rest of your acquaintance were the first to come to us. But all hope was at an end, M. Benassis was dying fast. He gave no sign of consciousness, not even when M. Bordier cauterized the soles of his feet. It was an attack of gout, combined with an apoplectic stroke.

"I am giving you all these details, dear father, because I know how much you cared for him. As for me, I am very sad and full of grief, for I can say to you that I cared more for him than for anyone else except you. I learned more from M. Benassis's talk in the evenings than I ever could have learned at school.

"You cannot imagine the scene next morning when the news of his death was known in the place. The garden

and the yard here were filled with people. How they sobbed and wailed! Nobody did any work that day. Everyone recalled the last time that they had seen M. Benassis, and what he had said, or they talked of all that he had done for them; and those who were least overcome with grief spoke for the others. Everyone wanted to see him once more, and the crowd grew larger every moment. The sad news traveled so fast that men and women and children came from ten leagues round; all the people in the district, and even beyond it, had that one thought in their minds.

"It was arranged that four of the oldest men of the commune should carry the coffin. It was a very difficult task for them, for the crowd was so dense between the church and M. Benassis's house. There must have been nearly five thousand people there, and almost everyone knelt as if the Host were passing. There was not nearly room for them in the church. In spite of their grief, the crowd was so silent that you could hear the sound of the bell during Mass and the chanting as far as the end of the High Street; but when the procession started again for the new cemetery, which M. Benassis had given to the town, little thinking, poor man, that he himself would be the first to be buried there, a great cry went up. M. Janvier wept as he said the prayers; there were no dry eyes among the crowd. And so we buried him.

"As night came on the people dispersed, carrying sorrow and mourning everywhere with them. The next day Gondrin and Goguelat, and Butifer, with some others, set to work to raise a sort of pyramid of earth, twenty feet high, above the spot where M. Benassis lies; it is being covered now with green sods, and everyone is helping them. These things, dear father, have all happened in three days.

"M. Dufau found M. Benassis's will lying open on the table where he used to write. When it was known how his property had been left, affection for him and regret for his loss became even deeper if possible. And now, dear father, I am waiting for Butifer (who is taking this letter to you) to come back with your answer. You must tell me what I am to do. Will you come to fetch me, or shall

I go to you at Grenoble? Tell me what you wish me to do, and be sure that I shall obey you in everything.

“Farewell, dear father, I send my love, and I am your affectionate son,  
ADRIEN GENESTAS.”

“Ah! well, I must go over,” the soldier exclaimed.

He ordered his horse and started out. It was one of those still December mornings when the sky is covered with gray clouds. The wind was too light to disperse the thick fog, through which the bare trees and damp house fronts seemed strangely unfamiliar. The very silence was gloomy. There is such a thing as a silence full of light and gladness; on a bright day there is a certain joyousness about the slightest sound, but in such dreary weather Nature is not silent, she is dumb. All sounds seemed to die away, stifled by the heavy air.

There was something in the gloom without him that harmonized with Colonel Genestas's mood; his heart was oppressed with grief, and thoughts of death filled his mind. Involuntarily he began to think of the cloudless sky on that lovely spring morning, and remembered how bright the valley had looked when he passed through it for the first time; and now, in strong contrast with that day, the heavy sky above him was a leaden gray, there was no greenness about the hills, which were still waiting for the cloak of winter snow that invests them with a certain beauty of its own. There was something painful in all this bleak and bare desolation for a man who was traveling to find a grave at his journey's end; the thought of that grave haunted him. The lines of dark pine trees here and there along the mountain ridges against the sky seized on his imagination; they were in keeping with the officer's mournful musings. Every time that he looked over the valley that lay before him, he could not help thinking of the trouble that had befallen the canton, of the man who had died so lately, and of the blank left by his death.

Before long, Genestas reached the cottage where he had asked for a cup of milk on his first journey. The sight of the smoke rising above the hovel where the charity-children

were being brought up recalled vivid memories of Benassis and of his kindness of heart. The officer made up his mind to call there. He would give some alms to the poor woman for his dead friend's sake. He tied his horse to a tree, and opened the door of the hut without knocking.

"Good-day, mother," he said, addressing the old woman, who was sitting by the fire with the little ones crouching at her side. "Do you remember me?"

"Oh! quite well, sir! You came here one fine morning last spring and gave us two crowns."

"There, mother! that is for you and the children."

"Thank you kindly, sir. May Heaven bless you!"

"You must not thank me, mother," said the officer; "it is all through M. Benassis that the money has come to you."

The old woman raised her eyes and gazed at Genestas.

"Ah! sir," she said, "he has left his property to our poor countryside, and made all of us his heirs; but we have lost him who was worth more than all, for it was he who made everything turn out well for us."

"Good-by, mother! Pray for him," said Genestas, making a few playful cuts at the children with his riding whip.

The old woman and her little charges went out with him; they watched him mount his horse and ride away.

He followed the road along the valley until he reached the bridle-path that led to La Fosseuse's cottage. From the slope above the house he saw that the door was fastened and the shutters closed. In some anxiety he returned to the highway, and rode on under the poplars, now bare and leafless. Before long he overtook the old laborer, who was dressed in his Sunday best, and creeping slowly along the road. There was no bag of tools on his shoulder.

"Good-day, old Moreau!"

"Ah! good-day, sir. . . . I mind who you are now!" the old fellow exclaimed after a moment. "You are a friend of monsieur, our late mayor! Ah! sir, would it not have been far better if God had only taken a poor rheumatic old creature like me instead? It would not have mattered if He had taken me, but *he* was the light of our eyes."

"Do you know how it is that there is no one at home up there at La Fosseuse's cottage?"

The old man gave a look at the sky.

"What time is it, sir? The sun has not shone all day," he said.

"It is ten o'clock."

"Oh well, then, she will have gone to Mass or else to the cemetery. She goes there every day. He has left her five hundred livres a year and her house for as long as she lives, but his death has fairly turned her brain, as you may say——"

"And where are you going, old Moreau?"

"Little Jacques is to be buried to-day, and I am going to the funeral. He was my nephew, poor little chap; he had been ailing a long while, and he died yesterday morning. It really looked as though it was M. Benassis who kept him alive. That is the way! All these younger ones die!" Moreau added, half jestingly, half sadly.

Genestas reined in his horse as he entered the town, for he met Gondrin and Goguelat, each carrying a pick-ax and shovel. He called to them, "Well, old comrades, we have had the misfortune to lose him——"

"There, there, that is enough, sir!" interrupted Goguelat, "we know that well enough. We have just been cutting turf to cover his grave."

"His life will make a grand story to tell, eh?"

"Yes," answered Goguelat, "he was the Napoleon of our valley, barring the battles."

As they reached the parsonage, Genestas saw a little group about the door; Butifer and Adrien were talking with M. Janvier, who, no doubt, had just returned from saying Mass. Seeing that the officer made as though he were about to dismount, Butifer promptly went to hold the horse, while Adrien sprang forward and flung his arms about his father's neck. Genestas was deeply touched by the boy's affection, though no sign of this appeared in the soldier's words or manner.

"Why, Adrien," he said, "you certainly are set up again. My goodness! Thanks to our poor friend, you have almost

grown into a man. I shall not forget your tutor here, Master Butifer."

"Oh! colonel," entreated Butifer, "take me away from here and put me into your regiment. I cannot trust myself now that M. le Maire is gone. *He* wanted me to go for a soldier, didn't he? Well, then, I will do what he wished. He told you all about me, and you will not be hard on me, will you, M. Genestas?"

"Right, my fine fellow," said Genestas, as he struck his hand in the other's. "I will find something to suit you, set your mind at rest—— And how is it with you, M. le Curé?"

"Well, like everyone else in the canton, colonel, I feel sorrow for his loss, but no one knows as I do how irreparable it is. He was like an angel of God among us. Fortunately, he did not suffer at all; it was a painless death. The hand of God gently loosed the bonds of a life that was one continual blessing to us all."

"Will it be intrusive if I ask you to accompany me to the cemetery? I should like to bid him farewell, as it were."

Genestas and the curé, still in conversation, walked on together. Butifer and Adrien followed them at a few paces' distance. They went in the direction of the little lake, and as soon as they were clear of the town, the lieutenant-colonel saw on the mountainside a large piece of waste land inclosed by walls.

"That is the cemetery," the curé told him. "He is the first to be buried in it. Only three months before he was brought here it struck him that it was a very bad arrangement to have the churchyard round the church; so, in order to carry out the law, which prescribes that burial grounds should be removed to a stated distance from human dwellings, he himself gave this piece of land to the commune. We are burying a child, poor little thing, in the new cemetery to-day, so we shall have begun by laying innocence and virtue there. Can it be that death is after all a reward? Did God mean it as a lesson for us when He took these two perfect natures to Himself? When we have been tried and disciplined in youth by pain, in later life by mental suffering,

are we so much the nearer to Him? Look! there is the rustic monument which has been erected to his memory."

Genestas saw a mound of earth about twenty feet high. It was bare as yet, but dwellers in the district were already busily covering the sloping sides with green turf. La Fosseuse, her face buried in her hands, was sobbing bitterly; she was sitting on the pile of stones in which they had planted a great wooden cross, made from the trunk of a pine tree, from which the bark had not been removed. The officer read the inscription; the letters were large, and had been deeply cut in the wood.

D. O. M.

HERE LIES

THE GOOD MONSIEUR BENASSIS

THE FATHER OF US ALL

*Pray for Him*

"Was it you, sir," asked Genestas, "who——?"

"No," answered the curé; "it is simply what is said everywhere, from the heights up there above us down to Grenoble, so the words have been carved here."

Genestas remained silent for a few moments. Then he moved from where he stood and came nearer to La Fosseuse, who did not hear him, and spoke again to the curé.

"As soon as I have my pension," he said, "I will come to finish my days here among you."

# **THE COUNTRY PARSON**





## PREFACE

PERHAPS in no instance of Balzac's work is his singular fancy for pulling that work about more remarkably instanced and illustrated than in the case of *Le Curé de Village*. The double date, 1837-1845, which the author attached to it, in his usual conscientious manner, to indicate these revisions, has a greater signification than almost anywhere else. When the book, or rather its constituent parts, first appeared in the *Fresque* for 1839, having been written the winter before, not only was it very different in detail, but the order of the parts was altogether dissimilar. Balzac here carried out his favorite plan—a plan followed by many other authors no doubt, but always, as it seems to me, of questionable wisdom—that of beginning in the middle and then “throwing back” with a long retrospective and explanatory digression.

In this version the story of Taschereau's crime and its punishment came first; and it was not till after the execution that the early history of Véronique (who gave her name to this part as to a *Suite du Curé de Village*) was introduced. This history ceased at the crisis of her life; and when it was taken up in a third part, called *Véronique au Tombeau*, only the present conclusion of the book, with her confession, was given. The long account of her sojourn at Montégnac, of her labors there, of the episode of Farralesche, and so forth, did not appear till 1841, when the whole book, with the inversions and insertions just indicated, appeared in such a changed form, that even the indefatigable M. de Lovenjoul dismisses as “impossible” the idea of exhibiting a complete picture of the various changes made. Nor was the author even yet contented; for in 1845, before establishing it in its place in the *Comédie*, he not only, as was his wont, took out the chapter headings, leaving five divisions only, but introduced other alterations, resulting in the present condition of the book.

It is not necessary to dwell very much on the advantages or disadvantages of these changes. There is no doubt that,

as has been said above, the trick of beginning the story in the middle, and then doubling back on the start, has many drawbacks. But, on the other hand, that of an introduction which has apparently very little to do with anything, and which has nothing whatever to do with the title of the book, has others; and I do not know that in the final reconstitution Balzac has made Véronique's part in the matter, even in her confession, as clear as it should be. It is indeed almost unavoidable that twisting and turning the shape of a story about, as he was wont to do, should bring the penalty of destroying, or at least damaging, its unity.

As the book stands it may be said to consist of three parts united rather by identity of the personages who act in them than by exact dramatic connection. There is, to take the title-part first (though it is by no means the most really important or pervading), the picture of the "Curé de Village," which is almost an exact, and beyond doubt a designed, pendant to that of the "Médecin de Campagne." The Abbé Bonnet indeed is not able to carry out economic ameliorations, as Dr. Benassis is, personally, but by inducing Véronique to do so he brings about the same result, and on an even larger scale. His personal action (with the necessary changes for his profession) is also tolerably identical, and on the whole the two portraits may fairly be hung together as Balzac's ideal representations of the good man in soul-curing and body-curing respectively. Both are largely conditioned by his eighteenth century fancy for "playing Providence," and by his delight in extensive financial-commercial schemes. I believe that in both books these schemes have been stumbling-blocks, if not to all readers, yet to a good many. But the beauty of the portraiture of the "Curé" is nearly, if not quite, equal to that of the doctor, though the institution of celibacy has prevented Balzac from giving a key to the conduct of Bonnet quite as sufficient as that which he furnished for the conduct of Benassis.

The second part of the book is the crime—episodic as regards the criminal, cardinal as regards other points—of Tascheron. Balzac was very fond of "his crimes"; and

it is quite worth while in connection with his handling of the murder here to study the curious story of his actual interference in the famous Peytel case, which also interested Thackeray so much in his Paris days. The Tascheron case itself (which from a note appears to have been partly suggested by some actual affair) no doubt has interests for those who like such things, and the picture of the criminal in prison is very striking. But we see and know so very little of Tascheron himself, and even to the very last (which is long afterwards) we are left so much in the dark as to his love for Véronique, that the thing has an extraneous air. It is like a short story foisted in.

This objection connects itself at once with a similar one to the delineation of Véronique. There is nothing in her conduct intrinsically impossible, or even improbable. A girl of her temperament, at once, as often happens, strongly sensual and strongly devotional, deprived of her good looks by illness, thrown into the arms of a husband physically repulsive, and after a short time not troubling himself to be amiable in any other way, might very well take refuge in the substantial, if not ennobling, consolations offered by a good-looking and amiable young fellow of the lower class. Her conduct at the time of the crime (her exact complicity in which is, as we have said, rather imperfectly indicated) is also fairly probable, and to her repentance and amendment of life no exception can be taken. But only in this last stage do we really *see* anything of the inside of Véronique's nature; and even then we do not see it completely. The author's silence on the details of the actual *liaison* with Tascheron has its advantages, but it also has its defects.

Still, the book is one of great attraction and interest, and takes, if I may judge by my own experience, a high rank for enchaining power among that class of Balzac's books which cannot be put exactly highest. If the changes made in it by its author have to some extent dislocated it as a whole, they have resulted in very high excellence for almost all the parts.

As something has necessarily been said already about

the book-history of the *Curé de Village*, little remains but to give exact dates and places of appearance. The *Presse* published the (original) first part in December-January 1838-39, the original second (*Véronique*) six months later, and the third (*Véronique au Tombeau*) in August. All had chapters and chapter titles. As a book it was in its first complete form published by Souverain in 1841, and was again altered when it took rank in the *Comédie* six years later.

G. S.

# THE COUNTRY PARSON

## I

### VÉRONIQUE

**A**T the lower end of Limoges, at the corner of the Rue de la Vieille-Poste and the Rue de la Cité, there stood, some thirty years back, an old-fashioned shop of the kind that seems to have changed in nothing since the Middle Ages. The great stone paving-slabs, riven with countless cracks, were laid upon the earth; the damp oozed up through them here and there; while the heights and hollows of this primitive flooring would have tripped up those who were not careful to observe them. Through the dust on the walls it was possible to discern a sort of mosaic of timber and bricks, iron and stone, a heterogeneous mass which owed its compact solidity to time, and perhaps to chance. For more than two centuries the huge rafters of the ceiling had bent without breaking beneath the weight of the upper stories, which were constructed of wooden framework, protected from the weather by slates arranged in a geometrical pattern; altogether, it was a quaint example of a burgess's house in olden times. Once there had been carved figures on the wooden window-frames, but sun and rain had destroyed the ornaments, and the windows themselves stood all awry; some bent outwards, some bent in, yet others were minded to part company, and one and all carried a little soil deposited (it would be hard to say how) in crannies hollowed by the rain, where a few shy creeping plants and thin weeds grew to break into meager blossom in the spring. Velvet mosses covered the roof and the window-sills.

The pillar which supported the corner of the house, built though it was of composite masonry, that is to say, partly of stone, partly of brick and flints, was alarming to behold by reason of its curvature; it looked as though it must give

way some day beneath the weight of the superstructure whose gable projected fully six inches. For which reason the local authorities and the Board of Works bought the house and pulled it down to widen the street. The venerable corner pillar had its charms for lovers of old Limoges; it carried a pretty sculptured shrine and a mutilated image of the Virgin, broken during the Revolution. Citizens of an archæological turn could discover traces of the stone sill meant to hold candlesticks and to receive wax tapers and flowers and votive offerings of the pious.

Within the shop a wooden staircase at the further end gave access to the two floors above and to the attics in the roof. The house itself, packed in between two neighboring dwellings, had little depth from back to front, and no light save from the windows which gave upon the street, the two rooms on each floor having a window apiece, one looking out into the Rue de la Vieille-Poste, and the other into the Rue de la Cité. In the Middle Ages no artisan was better housed. The old corner shop must surely have belonged to some armorer or cutler, or master of some craft which could be carried on in the open air, for it was impossible for its inmates to see until the heavily ironed shutters were taken down and air as well as light freely admitted. There were two doors (as is usually the case where a shop faces into two streets), one on either side the pillar. But for the interruption of the white threshold stones, hollowed by the wear of centuries, the whole shop front consisted of a low wall which rose to elbow height. Along the top of this wall a groove had been contrived, and a similar groove ran the length of the beam above, which supported the weight of the house wall. Into these grooves slid the heavy shutters, secured by huge iron bolts and bars; and when the doorways had been made fast in like manner, the artisan's workshop was as good as a fortress.

For the first twenty years of this present century the Limousins had been accustomed to see the interior filled up with old iron and brass, cart springs, tires, bells, and every sort of metal from the demolition of houses; but the curious in the débris of the old town discovered, on a closer

inspection, the traces of a forge in the place and a long streak of soot, signs which confirmed the guesses of archaeologists as to the original purpose of the dwelling. On the first floor there were a living room and a kitchen, two more rooms on the second, and an attic in the roof, which was used as a warehouse for goods more fragile than the hardware tumbled down pell-mell in the shop.

The house had been first let and then sold to one Sauviat, a hawker, who from 1792 till 1796 traveled in Auvergne for a distance of fifty leagues round bartering pots, plates, dishes, and glasses, all the gear, in fact, needed by the poorest cottagers, for old iron, brass, lead, and metal of every sort and description. The Auvergnat would give a brown earthen pipkin worth a couple of sous for a pound weight of lead or a couple of pounds of iron, a broken spade or hoe, or an old cracked saucepan; and was always judge in his own cause, and gave his own weights. In three years' time Sauviat took another trade in addition, and became a tinman.

In 1793 he was able to buy a château put up for sale by the nation. This he pulled down; and doubtless repeated a profitable experiment at more than one point in his sphere of operations. After a while these first essays of his gave him an idea; he suggested a piece of business on a large scale to a fellow-countryman in Paris; and so it befell that the *Black Band*, so notorious for the havoc which it wrought among old buildings, was a sprout of old Sauviat's brain, the invention of the hawker whom all Limoges had seen for seven-and-twenty years in his tumbledown shop among his broken bells, flails, chains, brackets, twisted leaden gutters, and heterogeneous old iron. In justice to Sauviat, it should be said that he never knew how large and how notorious the association became; he only profited by it to the extent of the capital which he invested with the famous firm of Brézac.

At last the Auvergnat grew tired of roaming from fair to fair and place to place, and settled down in Limoges, where, in 1797, he had married a wife, the motherless daughter of a tinman, Champagnac by name. When the father-



in-law died, he bought the house in which he had, in a manner, localized his trade in old iron, though for some three years after his marriage he had still made his rounds, his wife accompanying him. Sauviat had completed his fiftieth year when he married old Champagnac's daughter, and the bride herself was certainly thirty years old at the least. Champagnac's girl was neither pretty nor blooming. She was born in Auvergne, and the dialect was a mutual attraction; she was, moreover, of the heavy build which enables a woman to stand the roughest work; so she went with Sauviat on his rounds, carried loads of lead and iron on her back, and drove the sorry carrier's van full of the pottery on which her husband made usurious profits, little as his customers imagined it. La Champagnac was sunburned and high-colored. She enjoyed rude health, exhibiting when she laughed a row of teeth large and white as blanched almonds, and, as to physique, possessed the bust and hips of a woman destined by Nature to be a mother. Her prolonged spinsterhood was entirely due to her father; he had not read Molière, but he raised Harpagon's cry of "*Sans dot!*" which scared suitors. The "*Sans dot*" did not frighten Sauviat away; he was not averse to receiving the bride without a portion; in the first place, a would-be bridegroom of fifty ought not to raise difficulties; and, in the second, his wife saved him the expense of a servant. He added nothing to the furniture of his room. On his wedding day it contained a four-post bedstead hung with green serge curtains and a valance with a scalloped edge; a dresser, a chest of drawers, four easy-chairs, a table, and a looking-glass, all bought at different times and from different places; and till he left the old house for good, the list remained the same. On the upper shelves of the dresser stood sundry pewter plates and dishes, no two of them alike. After this description of the bedroom, the kitchen may be left to the reader's imagination.

Neither husband nor wife could read, a slight defect of education which did not prevent them from reckoning money to admiration, nor from carrying on one of the most prosperous of all trades, for Sauviat never bought anything unless he felt sure of making a hundred per cent. on the

transaction, and dispensed with bookkeeping and counting-house by carrying on a ready-money business. He possessed, moreover, a faculty of memory so perfect, that an article might remain for five years in his shop, and at the end of the time both he and his wife could recollect the price they gave for it to a farthing, together with the added interest for every year since the outlay.

Sauviat's wife, when she was not busy about the house, always sat on a rickety wooden chair in her shop door beside the pillar, knitting, and watching the passers-by, keeping an eye on the old iron, and selling, weighing, and delivering it herself if Sauviat was out on one of his journeys. At daybreak you might hear the dealer in old iron taking down the shutters, the dog was let loose into the street, and very soon Sauviat's wife came down to help her husband to arrange their wares. Against the low wall of the shop in the Rue de la Cité and the Rue de la Vieille-Poste, they propped their heterogeneous collection of broken gun barrels, cart springs, and harness bells—all the gimeracks, in short, which served as a trade sign and gave a sufficiently poverty-stricken look to a shop which in reality often contained twenty thousand francs' worth of lead, steel, and bell metal. The retired hawker and his wife never spoke of their money; they hid it as a malefactor conceals a crime, and for a long while were suspected of clipping gold louis and silver crowns.

When old Champagnac died, the Sauviats made no inventory. They searched every corner and cranny of the old man's house with the quickness of rats, stripped it bare as a corpse, and sold the tinware themselves in their own shop. Once a year, when December came round, Sauviat would go to Paris, traveling in a public conveyance; from which premises, observers in the quarter concluded that the dealer in old iron saw to his investments in Paris himself, so that he might keep the amount of his money a secret. It came out in after years that as a lad Sauviat had known one of the most celebrated metal merchants in Paris, a fellow-countryman from Auvergne, and that Sauviat's savings were invested with the prosperous firm of Brézac, the corner-

stone of the famous association of the **Black Band**, which was started, as has been said, by Sauviat's advice, and in which he held shares.

Sauviat was short and stout. He had a weary-looking face and an honest expression, which attracted customers, and was of no little use to him in the matter of sales. The dryness of his affirmations, and the perfect indifference of his manner, aided his pretensions. It was not easy to guess the color of the skin beneath the black metallic grime which covered his curly hair and countenance seamed with the smallpox. His forehead was not without a certain nobility; indeed, he resembled the traditional type chosen by painters for Saint Peter, the man of the people among the apostles, the roughest among their number, and likewise the shrewdest; Sauviat had the hands of an indefatigable worker, rifted by ineffaceable cracks, square-shaped, and coarse and large. The muscular framework of his chest seemed indestructible. All through his life he dressed like a hawker, wearing the thick iron-bound shoes, the blue stockings which his wife knitted for him, the leather gaiters, breeches of bottle-green velveteen, a coat with short skirts of the same material, and a flapped waistcoat, where the copper key of a silver watch dangled from an iron chain, worn by constant friction, till it shone like polished steel. Round his neck he wore a cotton handkerchief, frayed by the constant rubbing of his beard. On Sundays and holidays he appeared in a maroon overcoat so carefully kept that he bought a new one but twice in a score of years.

As for their manner of living, the convicts in the hulks might be said to fare sumptuously in comparison; it was a day of high festival indeed when they ate meat. Before La Sauviat could bring herself to part with the money needed for their daily sustenance, she rummaged through the two pockets under her skirt, and never drew forth coin that was not clipped or light weight, eying the crowns of six livres and fifty sous pieces dolorously before she changed one of them. The Sauviats contented themselves, for the most part, with herrings, dried peas, cheese, hard-boiled eggs and salad, and vegetables dressed in the cheapest

way. They lived from hand to mouth, laying in nothing except a bundle of garlic now and again, or a rope of onions, which could not spoil, and cost them a mere trifle. As for firewood, La Sauviat bought the few sticks which they required in winter of the tagot-sellers day by day. By seven o'clock in winter and nine in summer the shutters were fastened, the master and mistress in bed, and their huge dog, who picked up his living in the kitchens of the quarter, on guard in the shop; Mother Sauviat did not spend three francs a year on candles.

A joy came into their sober, hard-working lives; it was a joy that came in the natural order of things, and caused the only outlay which they had been known to make. In May 1802 La Sauviat bore a daughter. No one was called in to her assistance, and five days later she was stirring about her house again. She nursed her child herself, sitting on the chair in the doorway, selling her wares as usual, with the baby at her breast. Her milk cost nothing, so for two years she suckled the little one, who was none the worse for it, for little Véronique grew to be the prettiest child in the lower town, so pretty, indeed, that passers-by would stop to look at her. The neighbors saw in old Sauviat traces of a tenderness of which they had believed him incapable. While the wife made the dinner ready he used to rock the little one in his arms, crooning the refrain of some Auvergnat song; and the workmen as they passed sometimes saw him sitting motionless, gazing at little Véronique asleep on her mother's knee. His gruff voice grew gentle for the child; he would wipe his hands on his trousers before taking her up. When Véronique was learning to walk, her father squatted on his heels four paces away, holding out his arms to her, gleeful smiles puckering the deep wrinkles on the harsh, stern face of bronze; it seemed as if the man of iron, brass, and lead had once more become flesh and blood. As he stood leaning against the pillar motionless as a statue, he would start at a cry from Véronique, and spring over the iron to find her, for she spent her childhood in playing about among the metallic spoils of old châteaux heaped up in the recesses of the shop, and

never hurt herself; and if she played in the street or with the neighbors' children, she was never allowed out of her mother's sight.

It is worth while to add that the Sauviats were eminently devout. Even when the Revolution was at its height Sauviat kept Sundays and holidays punctually. Twice in those days he had all but lost his head for going to hear Mass said by a priest who had not taken the oath to the Republic. He found himself in prison at last, justly accused of conniving at the escape of a bishop whose life he had saved; but luckily for the hawker, steel files and iron bars were old acquaintances of his, and he made his escape. Whereupon the Court finding that he failed to put in an appearance, gave judgment by default, and condemned him to death; and it may be added, that as he never returned to clear himself, he finally died under sentence of death. In his religious sentiments his wife shared; the parsimonious rule of the household was only relaxed in the name of religion. Punctually the two paid their quota for sacramental bread, and gave money for charity. If the curate of Saint-Étienne came to ask for alms, Sauviat or his wife gave without fuss or hesitation what they believed to be their due share towards the funds of the parish. The broken Virgin on their pillar was decked with sprays of box when Easter came round; and so long as there were flowers, the passers-by saw that the blue glass bouquet-holders were never empty, and this especially after Véronique's birth. Whenever there was a procession the Sauviats never failed to drape their house with hangings and garlands, and contributed to the erection and adornment of the altar—the pride of their street.

So Véronique was brought up in the Christian faith. As soon as she was seven years old, she was educated by a gray Sister, an Auvergnate, to whom the Sauviats had rendered some little service; for both of them were sufficiently obliging so long as their time or their substance was not in question, and helpful after the manner of the poor, who lend themselves with a certain heartiness. It was the Franciscan Sister who taught Véronique to read and write; she in-

structed her pupil in the History of the People of God, in the Catechism, and the Old and New Testaments, and, to a certain small extent, in the rules of arithmetic. That was all. The good Sister thought that it would be enough, but even this was too much.

Véronique at nine years of age astonished the quarter by her beauty. Everyone admired a face which might one day be worthy of the pencil of some impassioned seeker after an ideal type. "The little Virgin," as they called her, gave promise of being graceful of form and fair of face; the thick, bright hair which set off the delicate outlines of her features completed her resemblance to the Madonna. Those who have seen the divine child virgin in Titian's great picture of the *Presentation in the Temple* may know what Véronique was like in these years; she had the same frank innocence of expression, the same look as of a wondering seraph in her eyes, the same noble simplicity, the same queenly bearing.

Two years later, Véronique fell ill of the smallpox, and would have died of it but for Sister Martha, who nursed her. During those two months, while her life was in danger, the quarter learned how tenderly the Sauviats loved their daughter. Sauviat attended no sales, and went nowhere. All day long he stayed in the shop, or went restlessly up and down the stairs, and he and his wife sat up night after night with the child. So deep was his dumb grief, that no one dared to speak to him; the neighbors watched him pityingly, and asked for news of Véronique of no one but Sister Martha. The days came when the child's life hung by a thread, and neighbors and passers-by saw, for the first and only time in Sauviat's life, the slow tears rising under his eyelids and rolling down his hollow cheeks. He never wiped them away. For hours he sat like one stupefied, not daring to go upstairs to the sick-room, staring before him with unseeing eyes; he might have been robbed, and he would not have noticed it.

Véronique's life was saved, not so her beauty. A uniform tint, in which red and brown were evenly blended, overspread her face; the disease left countless little scars which ccarsened

the surface of the skin, and wrought havoc with the delicate underlying tissues. Nor had her forehead escaped the ravages of the scourge; it was brown, and covered with dints like the marks of hammer strokes. No combination is more discordant than a muddy-brown complexion and fair hair; the pre-established harmony of coloring is broken. Deep irregular seams in the surface had spoiled the purity of her features and the delicacy of the outlines of her face; the Grecian profile, the subtle curves of a chin finely molded as white porcelain, were scarcely discernible beneath the coarsened skin; the disease had only spared what it was powerless to injure—the teeth and eyes. But Véronique did not lose her grace and beauty of form, the full rounded curves of her figure, nor the slenderness of her waist. At fifteen she was a graceful girl, and (for the comfort of the Sauviats) a good girl and devout, hard-working, industrious, always at home.

After her convalescence and first communion, her father and mother arranged for her the two rooms on the second floor. Some glimmering notion of what is meant by comfort passed through old Sauviat's mind; hard fare might do for him and his wife, but now a dim idea of making compensation for a loss which his daughter had not felt as yet, crossed his brain. Véronique had lost the beauty of which these two had been so proud, and thenceforward became the dearer to them, and the more precious in their eyes.

So one day Sauviat came in, carrying a carpet, a chance purchase, on his back, and this he himself nailed down on the floor of Véronique's room. He went to a sale of furniture at a château, and secured for her the red damask-curtained bed of some great lady, and hangings and chairs and easy-chairs covered with the same stuff. Gradually he furnished his daughter's rooms with second-hand purchases, in complete ignorance of the real value of the things. He set pots of mignonette on the window-sill, and brought back flowers for her from his wanderings; sometimes it was a rosebush, sometimes a tree carnation, and plants of all kinds, doubtless given to him by gardeners and innkeepers. If Véronique had known enough of other people to draw com-

parisons, and to understand their manners of life and the characters and the ignorance of her parents, she would have known how great the affection was which showed itself in these little things; but the girl gave her father and mother the love that springs from an exquisite nature—an instinctive and unreasoning love.

Véronique must have the finest linen which her mother could buy, and La Sauviat allowed her daughter to choose her own dresses. Both father and mother were pleased with her moderation; Véronique had no ruinous tastes. A blue silk gown for holiday wear, a winter dress of coarse merino for working days, and a striped cotton gown in summer; with these she was content.

On Sunday she went to Mass with her father and mother, and walked with them after vespers along the banks of the Vienne or in the neighborhood of the town. All through the week she stayed in the house, busy over the tapestry work, which was sold for the benefit of the poor, or the plain sewing for the hospital—no life could be more simple, more innocent, more exemplary than hers. She had other occupations beside her sewing; she read to herself, but only such books as the curate of Saint-Étienne lent to her. (Sister Martha had introduced the priest to the Sauviat family.)

For Véronique all the laws of the household economy were set aside. Her mother delighted to cook dainty fare for her, and made separate dishes for her daughter. Father and mother might continue, as before, to eat the walnuts and the hard bread, the herrings, and the dried peas fried with a little salt butter; but for Véronique, nothing was fresh enough nor good enough.

“Véronique must be a great expense to you,” remarked the hatter who lived opposite. He estimated old Sauviat’s fortune at a hundred thousand francs, and had thoughts of Véronique for his son.

“Yes, neighbor; yes, neighbor; yes,” old Sauviat answered, “she might ask me for ten crowns, and I should let her have them, I should. She has everything she wants, but she never asks for anything. She is as good and gentle as a lamb!”



And, in fact, Véronique did not know the price of anything; she had no wants; she never saw a piece of gold till the day of her marriage, and had no money of her own; her mother bought and gave to her all that she wished, and even for a beggar she drew upon her mother's pockets.

"Then she doesn't cost you much," commented the hatter.

"That is what you think, is it?" retorted Sauviat. "You wouldn't do it on less than forty crowns a year. You should see her room! There is a hundred crowns' worth of furniture in it; but when you have only one girl, you can indulge yourself; and, after all, what little we have will all be hers some day."

"Little? You must be rich, Father Sauviat. These forty years you have been in a line of business where there are no losses."

"Oh, they shouldn't cut my ears off for a matter of twelve hundred francs," said the dealer in old iron.

From the day when Véronique lost the delicate beauty, which everyone had admired in her childish face, old Sauviat had worked twice as hard as before. His business revived again, and prospered so well, that he went to Paris not once, but several times a year. People guessed his motives. If his girl had gone off in looks, he would make up for it in money, to use his own language.

When Véronique was about fifteen another change was wrought in the household ways. The father and mother went up to their daughter's room of an evening, and listened while she read aloud to them from the *Lives of the Saints*, or the *Lettres Édifiantes*, or from some other book lent by the curate of Saint-Étienne. The lamp was set behind a glass globe full of water, and Mother Sauviat knitted industriously, thinking in this way to pay for the oil. The neighbors opposite could look into the room and see the two old people sitting there, motionless as two carved Chinese figures, listening intently, admiring their daughter with all the power of an intelligence that was dim enough save in matters of business or religion. Doubtless there have been girls as pure as Véronique—there have been none purer nor more modest. Her confession surely filled the angels with

wonder, and gladdened the Virgin in heaven. She was now sixteen years old, and perfectly developed; you beheld in her the woman she would be. She was of medium height, neither the father nor the mother was tall; but the most striking thing about her figure was its lissome grace, the sinuous, gracious curves which Nature herself traces so finely, which the artist strives so painfully to render; the soft contours that reveal themselves to practiced eyes, for in spite of folds of linen and thickness of stuff, the dress is always molded and informed by the body. Simple, natural, and sincere, Véronique set this physical beauty in relief by her unaffected freedom of movement. She produced her "full and entire effect," if it is permissible to make use of the forcible legal phrase. She had the full-fleshed arms of an Auvergnate, the red, plump hands of a buxom inn-servant, and feet strongly made, but shapely, and in proportion to her height.

Sometimes there was wrought in her an exquisite mysterious change; suddenly it was revealed that in this frame dwelt a woman hidden from all eyes but Love's. Perhaps it was this transfiguration which awakened an admiration of her beauty in the father and mother, who astonished the neighbors by speaking of it as something divine. The first to see it were the clergy of the cathedral and the communicants at the table of the Lord. When Véronique's face was lighted up by impassioned feeling—and the mystical ecstasy which filled her at such times is one of the strongest emotions in the life of so innocent a girl—it seemed as if a bright inner radiance effaced the traces of the small-pox, and the pure, bright face appeared once more in the first beauty of childhood. Scarcely obscured by the thin veil of tissues coarsened by the disease, her face shone like some flower in dim places under the sea, when the sunlight strikes down and invests it with a mysterious glory. For a few brief moments Véronique was transfigured, the Little Virgin appeared and disappeared like a vision from heaven. The pupils of her eyes, which possessed in a high degree the power of contracting, seemed at such seasons to dilate and overspread the blue of the iris, which diminished

till it became nothing more than a slender ring; the change in the eyes, which thus grew piercing as the eagle's, completing the wonderful change in the face. Was it a storm of repressed and passionate longing, was it some power which had its source in the depths of her nature, which made those eyes dilate in broad daylight as other eyes widen in shadow, darkening their heavenly blue? Whatever the cause, it was impossible to look upon Véronique with indifference as she returned to her place after having been made one with God; all present beheld her in the radiance of her early beauty; at such times she would have eclipsed the fairest women in her loveliness. What a charm for a jealous lover in that veil of flesh which should hide his love from all other eyes; a veil which the hand of Love could raise to let fall again upon the rapture of wedded bliss. Véronique's lips, faultless in their curves, seemed to have been painted scarlet, so richly were they colored by the pure glow of the blood. Her chin and the lower part of her face were a little full, in the sense that painters give to the word, and this heaviness of contour is, by the unalterable laws of physiognomy, a certain sign of a capacity for almost morbid violence of passion. Her finely molded but almost imperious brow was crowned by a glorious diadem of thick abundant hair; the gold had deepened to a chestnut tint.

From her sixteenth year till the day of her marriage Véronique's demeanor was thoughtful and full of melancholy. In an existence so lonely she fell, as solitary souls are wont, to watching the grand spectacle of the life within, the progress of her thoughts, the ever-changing phantasmagoria of mental visions, the yearnings kindled by her pure life. Those who passed along the Rue de la Cité on sunny days had only to look up to see the Sauviats' girl sitting at her window with a bit of sewing or embroidery in her hand, drawing the needle in and out with a somewhat dreamy air. Her head stood out in sharp contrast against its background among the flowers which gave a touch of poetry to the prosaic, cracked, brown window-sill, and the small leaded panes of her casement. At times

a reflected glow from the red damask curtains added to the effect of the face so brightly colored already; it looked like some rosy-red flower above the little skyey garden, which she tended so carefully upon the ledge. So the quaint old house contained something still more quaint—a portrait of a young girl, worthy of Mieris, Van Ostade, Terburg, or Gerard Dow, framed in one of the old, worn, and blackened, and almost ruinous windows which Dutch artists loved to paint. If a stranger happened to glance up at the second floor, and stand agape with wonder at its construction, old Sauviat below would thrust out his head till he could look up the face of the overhanging story. He was sure to see Véronique there at the window. Then he would go in again, rubbing his hands, and say to his wife in the patois of Auvergne—

“Hullo, old woman, there is someone admiring your daughter!”

In 1820 an event occurred in Véronique’s simple and uneventful life. It was a little thing, which would have exercised no influence upon another girl, but destined to effect a fatal influence on Véronique’s future life. On the day of a suppressed Church festival, a working day for the rest of the town, the Sauviats shut their shop and went first to Mass and then for a walk. On their way into the country they passed by a bookseller’s shop, and among the books displayed outside Véronique saw one called *Paul et Virginie*. The fancy took her to buy it for the sake of the engraving; her father paid five francs for the fatal volume, and slipped it into the vast pocket of his overcoat.

“Wouldn’t it be better to show it to M. le Vicaire?” asked the mother; for her any printed book was something of an abracadabra, which might or might not be for evil.

“Yes, I thought I would,” Véronique answered simply.

She spent that night in reading the book, one of the most touching romances in the French language. The love scenes, half-biblical, and worthy of the early ages of the world, wrought havoc in Véronique’s heart. A hand, whether diabolical or divine, had raised for her the veil which hitherto had covered nature. On the morrow the Little Virgin

within the beautiful girl thought her flowers fairer than on the evening of the day before; she understood their symbolical language, she gazed up at the blue sky with exaltation, causeless tears rose to her eyes.

In every woman's life there comes a moment when she understands her destiny, or her organization, hitherto mute, speaks with authority. It is not always a man singled out by an involuntary and stolen glance who reveals the possession of a sixth sense, hitherto dormant; more frequently it is some sight that comes with the force of a surprise, a landscape, a page of a book, some day of high pomp, some ceremony of the Church; the scent of growing flowers, the delicate brightness of a misty morning, the intimate sweetness of divine music,—and something suddenly stirs in body or soul. For the lonely child, a prisoner in the dark house, brought up by parents almost as rough and simple as peasants; for the girl who had never heard an improper word, whose innocent mind had never received the slightest taint of evil; for the angelic pupil of Sister Martha and of the good curate of Saint-Étienne, the revelation of love came through a charming book from the hand of genius. No peril would have lurked in it for any other, but for her an obscene work would have been less dangerous. Corruption is relative. There are lofty and virginal natures which a single thought suffices to corrupt, a thought which works the more ruin because the necessity of combating it is not foreseen.

The next day Véronique showed her book to the good priest, who approved the purchase of a work so widely known for its childlike innocence and purity. But the heat of the tropics, the beauty of the land described in *Paul et Virginie*, the almost childish innocence of a love scarcely of this earth, had wrought upon Véronique's imagination. She was captivated by the noble and sweet personality of the author, and carried away towards the cult of the Ideal, that fatal religion. She dreamed of a lover, a young man like Paul, and brooded over soft imaginings of that life of lovers in some fragrant island. Below Limoges, and almost opposite the Faubourg Saint-Martial, there is a little island

in the Vienne; this, in her childish fancy, Véronique called the Isle of France, and filled with the fantastic creations of a young girl's dreams, vague shadows endowed with the dreamer's own perfections.

She sat more than ever in the window in those days, and watched the workmen as they came and went. Her parents' humble position forbade her to think of anyone but an artisan, yet, accustomed as she doubtless was to the idea of becoming a working-man's wife, she was conscious of an instinctive refinement which shrank from anything rough or coarse. So she began to weave for herself a romance such as most girls weave in their secret hearts for themselves alone. With the enthusiasm which might be expected of a refined and girlish imagination, she seized on the attractive idea of ennobling one of these working-men, of raising him to the level of her dreams. She made (who knows?) a Paul of some young man whose face she saw in the street, simply that she might attach her wild fancies to some human creature, as the overcharged atmosphere of a winter day deposits dew on the branches of a tree by the wayside, for the frost to transform into magical crystals. How should she escape a fall into the depths? for if she often seemed to return to earth from far-off heights with a reflected glory about her brows, yet oftener she appeared to bring with her flowers gathered on the brink of a torrent-stream which she had followed down into the abyss. On warm evenings she asked her old father to walk out with her, and never lost an opportunity of a stroll by the Vienne. She went into ecstasy at every step over the beauty of the sky and land, over the red glories of the sunset, or the joyous freshness of dewy mornings, and the sense of these things, the poetry of nature, passed into her soul.

She curled and waved the hair which she used to wear in simple plaits about her head; she thought more about her dress. The young, wild vine which had grown as its nature prompted about the old elm tree was transplanted and trimmed and pruned, and grew upon a dainty green trellis.

One evening in December 1822, when Sauviat (now seventy years old) had returned from a journey to Paris, the curate dropped in, and after a few commonplaces—

“You must think of marrying your daughter, Sauviat,” said the priest. “At your age you should no longer delay the fulfillment of an important duty.”

“Why, has Véronique a mind to be married?” asked the amazed old man.

“As you please, father,” the girl answered, lowering her eyes.

“We will marry her,” cried portly Mother Sauviat, smiling as she spoke.

“Why didn’t you say something about this before I left home, mother?” Sauviat asked. “I shall have to go back to Paris again.”

In Jérôme-Baptiste Sauviat’s eyes, plenty of money appeared to be synonymous with happiness. He had always regarded love and marriage in their purely physical and practical aspects; marriage was a means of transmitting his property (he being no more) to another self; so he vowed that Véronique should marry a well-to-do man. Indeed, for a long while past this had become a fixed idea with him. His neighbor the hatter, who was retiring from business, and had an income of two thousand livres a year, had already asked for Véronique for his son and successor (for Véronique was spoken of in the quarter as a good girl of exemplary life), and had been politely refused. Sauviat had not so much as mentioned this to Véronique.

The curate was Véronique’s director, and a great man in the Sauviats’ eyes; so the day after he had spoken of Véronique’s marriage as a necessity, old Sauviat shaved himself, put on his Sunday clothes, and went out. He said not a word to his wife and daughter, but the women knew that the old man had gone out to find a son-in-law. Sauviat went to M. Graslin.

M. Graslin, a rich banker of Limoges, had left his native Auvergne like Sauviat himself, without a sou in his pocket. He had begun life as a porter in a banker’s service, and from that position had made his way, like many another

capitalist, partly by thrift, partly by sheer luck. A cashier at five-and-twenty, and at five-and-thirty a partner in the firm of Perret & Grossetête, he at last bought out the original partners, and became sole owner of the bank. His two colleagues went to live in the country, leaving their capital in his hands at a low rate of interest. Pierre Graslin, at the age of forty-seven, was believed to possess six hundred thousand francs at the least. His reputation for riches had recently increased, and the whole department had applauded his free-handedness when he built a house for himself in the new quarter of the Place des Arbres, which adds not a little to the appearance of Limoges. It was a handsome house, on the plan of alignment, with a façade like a neighboring public building; but though the mansion had been finished for six months, Pierre Graslin hesitated to furnish it. His house had cost him so dear, that at the thought of living in it he drew back. Self-love, it may be, had enticed him to exceed the limits he had prudently observed all his life long; he thought, moreover, with the plain sense of a man of business, that it was only right that the inside of his house should be in keeping with the programme adopted with the façade. The plate and furniture and accessories needed for the housekeeping in such a mansion would cost more, according to his computations, than the actual outlay on the building. So, in spite of the town gossip, the broad grins of commercial circles, and the charitable surmises of his neighbors, Pierre Graslin stayed where he was on the damp and dirty ground floor dwelling in the Rue Montantmanigne, where his fortune had been made, and the great house stood empty. People might talk, but Graslin was happy in the approbation of his two old sleeping partners, who praised him for displaying such uncommon strength of mind.

Such a fortune and such a life as Graslin's is sure to excite plentiful covetousness in a country town. During the past ten years more than one proposition of marriage had been skillfully insinuated. But the estate of a bachelor was eminently suited to a man who worked from morning to night, overwhelmed with business, and wearied by his



daily round, a man as keen after money as a sportsman after game; so Graslin had fallen into none of the snares set for him by ambitious mothers who coveted a brilliant position for their daughters. Graslin, the Sauviat of a somewhat higher social sphere, did not spend two francs a day upon himself, and dressed no better than his second clerk. His whole staff consisted of a couple of clerks and an office boy, though he went through an amount of business which might fairly be called immense, so multitudinous were its ramifications. One of the clerks saw to the correspondence, the other kept the books; and for the rest Pierre Graslin was both the soul and body of his business. He chose his clerks from his family circle; they were of his own stamp, trustworthy, intelligent, and accustomed to work. As for the office boy, he led the life of a dray horse.

Graslin rose all the year round before five in the morning, and was never in bed till eleven o'clock at night. His charwoman, an old Auvergnate, who came in to do the housework and to cook his meals, had strict orders never to exceed the sum of three francs for the total daily expense of the household. The brown earthenware, the strong, coarse tablecloths and sheets, were in keeping with the manners and customs of an establishment in which the porter was the man of all work, and the clerks made their own beds. The blackened deal tables, the ragged straw-bottomed chairs with the holes through the center, the pigeon-hole writing desks and the ramshackle bedsteads, in fact, all the furniture of the counting-house and the three rooms above it, would not have fetched three thousand francs, even if the safe had been included, a colossal solid iron structure built into the wall itself, before which the porter nightly slept with a couple of dogs at his feet. It had been a legacy from the old firm to the present one.

Graslin was not often seen in society, where a great deal was heard about him. He dined with the Receiver-General (a business connection) two or three times a year, and he had been known to take a meal at the prefecture; for, to his own intense disgust, he had been nominated a member of the general council of the department. "He wasted his

time there," he said. Occasionally, when he had concluded a bargain with a business acquaintance, he was detained to lunch or dinner; and lastly, he was sometimes compelled to call upon his old patrons who spent the winter in Limoges. So slight was the hold which social relations had upon him, that at twenty-five years of age Graslin had not so much as offered a glass of water to any creature.

People used to say, "That is M. Graslin!" when he passed along the street, which is to say, "There is a man who came to Limoges without a farthing, and has made an immense amount of money." The Auvergnat banker became a kind of pattern and example held up by fathers of families to their offspring—and an epigram which more than one wife cast in her husband's teeth. It is easy to imagine the motives which induced this principal pivot in the financial machinery of Limoges to repel the matrimonial advances so perseveringly made to him. The daughters of MM. Perret and Grossetête had been married before Graslin was in a position to ask for them; but as each of these ladies had daughters in the schoolroom, people left Graslin alone at last, taking it for granted that either old Perret or Grossetête the shrewd had arranged a match to be carried out some future day, when Graslin should be bridegroom to one of the granddaughters.

Sauviat had watched his fellow countryman's rise and progress more closely than anyone. He had known Graslin ever since he came to Limoges, but their relative positions had changed so much (in appearance, at any rate) that the friendship became an acquaintance, renewed only at long intervals. Still, in his quality of fellow countryman, Graslin was never above having a chat with Sauviat in the Auvergne dialect if the two happened to meet, and in their own language they dropped the formal "you" for the more familiar "thee" and "thou."

In 1823, when the youngest of the brothers Grossetête, the Receiver-General of Bourges, married his daughter to the youngest son of the Comte de Fontaine, Sauviat saw that the Grossetêtes had no mind to take Graslin into their family.

After a conference with the banker, old Sauviat returned in high glee to dine in his daughter's room.

"Véronique will be Mme. Graslin," he told the two women.

"*Mme. Graslin!*" cried Mother Sauviat, in amazement.

"Is it possible?" asked Véronique. She did not know Graslin by sight, but the name produced much such an effect on her imagination as the word Rothschild upon a Parisian shop-girl.

"Yes. It is settled," old Sauviat continued solemnly. "Graslin will furnish his house very grandly; he will have the finest carriage from Paris that money can buy for our daughter, and the best pair of horses in Limousin. He will buy an estate worth five hundred thousand francs for her, and settle the house on her besides. In short, Véronique will be the first lady in Limoges, and the richest in the department, and can do just as she likes with Graslin."

Véronique's boundless affection for her father and mother, her bringing-up, her religious training, her utter ignorance, prevented her from raising a single objection; it did not so much as occur to her that she had been disposed of without her own consent. The next day Sauviat set out for Paris, and was away for about a week.

Pierre Graslin, as you may imagine, was no great talker; he went straight to the point, and acted promptly. A thing determined upon was a thing done at once. So in February 1822 a strange piece of news surprised Limoges like a sudden thunder-clap. Graslin's great house was being handsomely furnished. Heavy wagon loads from Paris arrived daily to be unpacked in the courtyard. Rumors flew about the town concerning the good taste displayed in the beautiful furniture, modern and antique. A magnificent service of plate came down from Odier's by the mail; and (actually) three carriages!—a calèche, a brougham, and a cabriolet arrived carefully packed in straw as if they had been jewels.

"M. Graslin is going to be married!" The words passed from mouth to mouth, and in the course of a single evening the news filtered through the drawing-rooms of the Limousin aristocracy to the back parlors and shops in the

suburbs, till all Limoges in fact had heard it. But whom was he going to marry? Nobody could answer the question. There was a mystery in Limoges.

As soon as Sauviat came back from Paris, Graslin made his first nocturnal visit, at half-past nine o'clock. Véronique knew that he was coming. She wore her blue silk gown, cut square at the throat, and a wide collar of cambric with a deep hem. Her hair she had simply parted into two bandeaux, waved and gathered, into a Grecian knot at the back of her head. She was sitting in a tapestry covered chair near the fireside, where her mother occupied a great armchair with a carved back and crimson velvet cushions, a bit of salvage from some ruined château. A blazing fire burned on the hearth. Upon the mantel-shelf, on either side of an old clock (whose value the Sauviats certainly did not know), stood two old-fashioned sconces; six wax candles in the sockets among the brazen vine-stems shed their light on the brown chamber, and on Véronique in her bloom. The old mother had put on her best dress.

In the midst of the silence that reigned in the streets at that silent hour, with the dimly lit staircase as a background, Graslin appeared for the first time before Véronique—the shy childish girl whose head was still full of sweet fancies of love derived from Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's book. Graslin was short and thin. His thick black hair stood up straight on his forehead like bristles in a brush, in startling contrast with a face red as a drunkard's, and covered with suppurating or bleeding pustules. The eruption was neither scrofula nor leprosy, it was simply a result of an overheated condition of the blood; unflagging toil, anxiety, fanatical application to business, late hours, a life steady and sober to the point of abstemiousness, had induced a complaint which seemed to be related to both diseases. In spite of partners, clerks, and doctors, the banker had never brought himself to submit to a regimen which might have alleviated the symptoms or cured an evil, trifling at first, which was daily aggravated by neglect as time went on. He wished to be rid of it, and sometimes for a few days would take the baths and

swallow the doses prescribed; but the round of business carried him away, and he forgot to take care of himself. Now and again he would talk of going away for a short holiday, and trying the waters somewhere or other for a cure, but where is the man in hot pursuit of millions who has been known to stop? In this flushed countenance gleamed two gray eyes, the iris speckled with brown dots and streaked with fine green threads radiating from the pupil—two covetous eyes, piercing eyes that went to the depths of the heart, implacable eyes in which you read resolution and integrity and business faculty. A snub nose, thick blubber lips, a prominent rounded forehead, grinning cheekbones, coarse ears corroded by the sour humors of the blood—altogether Graslin looked like an antique satyr—a satyr tricked out in a greatcoat, a black satin waistcoat, and a white neckcloth knotted about his neck. The strong muscular shoulders, which had once carried heavy burdens, stooped somewhat already; the thin legs, which seemed to be imperfectly jointed with the short thighs, trembled beneath the weight of that over-developed torso. The bony fingers covered with hair were like claws, as is often the case with those who tell gold all day long. Two parallel lines furrowed the face from the cheekbones to the mouth—an unerring sign that here was a man whose soul was taken up with material interests; while the eyebrows sloped up towards the temples in a manner which indicated a habit of swift decision. Grim and hard though the mouth looked, there was something there that suggested an underlying kindness, real good-heartedness, not called forth in a life of money getting, and choked, it may be, by cares of this world, but which might revive at contact with a woman.

At sight of this apparition, something clutched cruelly at Véronique's heart. Everything grew dark before her eyes. She thought she cried out, but in reality she sat still, mute, staring with fixed eyes.

"Véronique," said old Sauviat, "this is M. Graslin."

Véronique rose to her feet and bowed, then she sank down into her chair again, and her eyes sought her mother. But La Sauviat was smiling at the millionaire, looking so happy,

so very happy, that the poor child gathered courage to hide her violent feeling of repulsion and the shock she had received. In the midst of the conversation which followed, something was said about Graslin's health. The banker looked naïvely at himself in the beveled mirror framed in ebony.

"I am not handsome, *madoiselle*," he said, and he explained that the redness of his face was due to his busy life, and told them how he had disobeyed his doctor's orders. He hoped that as soon as he had a woman to look after him and his household, a wife who would take more care of him than he took of himself, he should look quite a different man.

"As if anybody married a man for his looks, mate!" cried the dealer in old iron, slapping his fellow countryman on the thigh.

Graslin's explanation appealed to instinctive feelings which more or less fill every woman's heart. Véronique bethought herself of her own face, marred by a hideous disease, and in her Christian humility she thought better of her first impression. Just then someone whistled in the street outside, Graslin went down, followed by Sauviat, who felt uneasy. Both men soon returned. The porter had brought the first bouquet of flowers, which had been in readiness for the occasion. At the reappearance of the banker with this stack of exotic blossoms, which he offered to his future bride, Véronique's feelings were very different from those with which she had first seen Graslin himself. The room was filled with the sweet scent, for Véronique it was the realization of her day-dreams of the tropics. She had never seen white camellias before, had never known the scent of the Alpine cytissus, the exquisite fragrance of the citronella, the jessamine of the Azores, the verbena and musk rose, and their sweetness, like a melody in perfume, falling on her senses stirred a vague tenderness in her heart.

Graslin left Véronique under the spell of that emotion; but almost nightly after Sauviat returned home, the banker waited till all Limoges was asleep, and then slunk along

under the walls to the house where the dealer in old iron lived. He used to tap softly on the shutters, the dog did not bark, the old man came down and opened the door to his fellow countryman, and Graslin would spend a couple of hours in the brown room where Véronique sat, and Mother Sauviat would serve him up an Auvergnat supper. The uncouth lover never came without a bouquet for Véronique, rare flowers only to be procured in M. Grossetête's hot-house, M. Grossetête being the only person in Limoges in the secret of the marriage. The porter went after dark to fetch the bouquet, which old Grossetête always gathered himself.

During those two months, Graslin went about fifty times to the house, and never without some handsome present, rings, a gold watch, a chain, a dressing case, or the like; amazing lavishness on his part, which, however, is easily explained.

Véronique would bring him almost the whole of her father's fortune—she would have seven hundred and fifty thousand francs. The old man kept for himself an income of eight thousand francs, an old investment in the Funds, made when he was in imminent danger of losing his head on the scaffold. In those days he had put sixty thousand francs in assignats (the half of his fortune) into Government stock. It was Brézac who had advised the investment, and dissuaded him afterwards when he thought of selling out: it was Brézac, too, who in the same emergency had been a faithful trustee for the rest of his fortune—the vast sum of seven hundred gold louis, with which Sauviat began to speculate as soon as he made good his escape from prison. In thirty years' time each of those gold louis had been transmuted into a bill for a thousand francs, thanks partly to the interest on the assignats, partly to the money which fell in at the time of Champagnac's death, partly to trading gains in the business, and to the money standing at compound interest in Brézac's concern. Brézac had done honestly by Sauviat, as Auvergnat does by Auvergnat. And so whenever Sauviat went to take a look at the front of Graslin's great house—

“Véronique shall live in that palace!” he said to himself.

He knew that there was not another girl in Limousin

who would have seven hundred and fifty thousand francs paid down on her marriage day, beside two hundred and fifty thousand of expectations. Graslin, the son-in-law of his choice, must therefore inevitably marry Véronique. So every evening Véronique received a bouquet, which daily made her little sitting room bright with flowers, a bouquet carefully kept out of sight of the neighbors. She admired the beautiful jewels, the rubies, pearls, and diamonds, the bracelets, dear to all daughters of Eve, and thought herself less ugly thus adorned. She saw her mother happy over this marriage, and she herself had no standard of comparison; she had no idea what marriage meant, no conception of its duties; and finally, she heard the curate of Saint-Étienne praising Graslin to her, in his solemn voice, telling her that this was an honorable man with whom she would lead an honorable life. So Véronique consented to receive M. Graslin's attentions. In a lonely and monotonous life like hers, let a single person present himself day by day, and before long that person will not be indifferent; for either an aversion, confirmed by a deeper knowledge, will turn to hate, and the visitor's presence will be intolerable; or custom stales (so to speak) the sight of physical defects, and then the mind begins to look for compensations. Curiosity busies itself with the face; from some cause or other the features light up, there is some fleeting gleam of beauty there; and at last the nature, hidden beneath the outward form, is discovered. In short, first impressions once overcome, the force with which the one soul is attracted to the other is but so much the stronger, because the discovery of the true nature of the other is all its own. So love begins. Herein lies the secret of the passionate love which beautiful persons entertain for others who are not beautiful in appearance; affection, looking deeper than the outward form, sees the form no longer, but a soul, and thenceforward knows nothing else. Moreover, the beauty so necessary in a woman takes in a man such a strange character, that women's opinions differ as much on the subject of a man's good looks as men about the beauty of a woman.

After much meditation and many struggles with herself,



Véronique allowed the banns to be published, and all Limoges rang with the incredible news. Nobody knew the secret—the bride's immense dowry. If that had been bruited abroad, Véronique might have chosen her husband, but perhaps even so would have been mistaken. It was a love match on Graslin's side, people averred.

Upholsterers arrived from Paris to furnish the fine house. The banker was going to great expense over it, and nothing else was talked of in Limoges. People discussed the price of the chandeliers, the gilding of the drawing-room, the mythical subjects of the timepieces; and there were well-informed folk who could describe the flower-stands and the porcelain stoves, the luxurious novel contrivances. For instance, there was an aviary built above the ice-house in the garden of the Hôtel Graslin; all Limoges marveled at the rare birds in it—the parrots, and Chinese pheasants, and strange water fowl, there was no one who had not seen them.

M. and Mme. Grossetête, old people much looked up to in Limoges, called several times upon the Sauviats, Graslin accompanying them. Mme. Grossetête, worthy woman, congratulated Véronique on the fortunate marriage she was to make; so the Church, the family, and the world, together with every trifling circumstance, combined to bring this match about.

In the month of April, formal invitations were sent to all Graslin's circle of acquaintance. At eleven o'clock one fine sunny morning a calèche and a brougham, drawn by Limousin horses in English harness (old Grossetête had superintended his colleague's stable), arrived before the poor little shop where the dealer in old iron lived; and the excited quarter beheld the bridegroom's sometime partners and his two clerks. There was a prodigious sensation, the street was filled by the crowd eager to see the Sauviats' daughter. The most celebrated hairdresser in Limoges had set the bride's crown on her beautiful hair and arranged her veil of priceless Brussels lace; but Véronique's dress was of simple white muslin. A sufficiently imposing assembly of the most distinguished women of Limoges was present

at the wedding in the cathedral; the Bishop himself, knowing the piety of the Sauviats, condescended to perform the marriage ceremony. People thought the bride a plain looking girl. For the first time she entered her hôtel, and went from surprise to surprise. A state dinner preceded the ball, to which Graslin had invited almost all Limoges. The dinner given to the Bishop, the prefect, the president of the court of first instance, the public prosecutor, the mayor, the general, and to Graslin's sometime employers and their wives, was a triumph for the bride, who, like all simple and unaffected people, proved unexpectedly charming. None of the married people would dance, so that Véronique continued to do the honors of her house, and won the esteem and good graces of most of her new acquaintances; asking old Grossetête, who had taken a great kindness for her, for information about her guests, and so avoiding blunders. During the evening the two retired bankers spread the news of the fortune, immense for Limousin, which the parents of the bride had given her. At nine o'clock the dealer in old iron went home to bed, leaving his wife to preside at the ceremony of undressing the bride. It was said in the town that M<sup>re</sup>. Graslin was plain but well shaped.

Old Sauviat sold his business and his house in the town, and bought a cottage on the left bank of the Vienne, between Limoges and Le Cluzeau, and ten minutes' walk from the Faubourg Saint-Martial. Here he meant that he and his wife should end their days in peace. The two old people had rooms in Graslin's hôtel, and dined there once or twice a week with their daughter, whose walks usually took the direction of their house.

The retired dealer in old iron had nothing to do, and nearly died of leisure. Luckily for him, his son-in-law found him some occupation. In 1823 the banker found himself with a porcelain factory on his hands. He had lent large sums to the manufacturers, which they were unable to repay, so he had taken over the business to recoup himself. In this concern he invested more capital, and by this means, and by his extensive business connections, made of it one of the largest factories in Limoges; so that when

he sold it in three years after he took it over, he made a large profit on the transaction. He made his father-in-law the manager of this factory, situated in the very same quarter of Saint-Martial where his house stood; and in spite of Sauviat's seventy-two years, he had done not a little in bringing about the prosperity of a business in which he grew quite young again. The plan had its advantages likewise for Graslin; but for old Sauviat, who threw himself heart and soul into the porcelain factory, he would have been perhaps obliged to take a clerk into partnership and lost part of the profits, which he now received in full; but as it was, he could look after his own affairs in the town, and feel his mind at ease as to the capital invested in the porcelain works.

In 1827 Sauviat met with an accident, which ended in his death. He was busy with the stock-taking, when he stumbled over one of the crates in which the china was packed, grazing his leg slightly. He took no care of himself, and mortification set in; they talked of amputation, but he would not hear of losing his leg, and so he died. His widow made over about two hundred and fifty thousand francs, the amount of Sauviat's estate, to her daughter and son-in-law, Graslin undertaking to pay her two hundred francs a month, an amount amply sufficient for her needs. She persisted in living on without a servant in the little cottage; keeping her point with the obstinacy of old age, and in spite of her daughter's entreaties; but, on the other hand, she went almost every day to the Hôtel Graslin, and Véronique's walks, as heretofore, usually ended at her mother's house. There was a charming view from the windows of the river and the little island in the Vienne, which Véronique had loved in the old days, and called her Isle of France.

The story of the Sauviats has been anticipated partly to save interruption to the other story of the Graslins' household, partly because it serves to explain some of the reasons of the retired life which Véronique Graslin led. The old mother foresaw how much her child might one day be made to suffer through Graslin's avarice; for long she held out, and refused to give up the rest of her fortune, and only

gave way when Véronique insisted upon it. Véronique was incapable of imagining circumstances in which a wife desires to have the control of her property, and acted upon a generous impulse; in this way she meant to thank Graslin for giving her back her liberty.

The unaccustomed splendors of Graslin's marriage had been totally at variance with his habits and nature. The great capitalist's ideas were very narrow. Véronique had had no opportunity of gauging the man with whom she must spend the rest of her life. During those fifty-five evening visits Graslin had shown but one side of his character—the man of business, the undaunted worker who planned and carried out large undertakings, the capitalist who looked at public affairs with a view to their probable effect on the bank rate and opportunities of money making. And, under the influence of his father-in-law's million, Graslin had behaved generously in those days, though even then his lavish expenditure was made to gain his own ends; he was drawn into expense in the springtide days of his marriage partly by the possession of the great house, which he called his "Folly," the house still called the Hôtel Graslin in Limoges.

As he had the horses, the calèche, and brougham, it was natural to make use of them to pay a round of visits on his marriage, and to go to the dinner parties and dances given in honor of the bride by official dignitaries and wealthy houses. Acting on the impulses which carried him out of his ordinary sphere, Graslin was "at home" to callers one day in the week, and sent to Paris for a cook. For about a year indeed he led the ordinary life of a man who has seventeen hundred thousand francs of his own, and can command a capital of three millions. He had come to be the most conspicuous personage in Limoges. During that year he generously allowed Mme. Graslin twenty-five twenty-franc pieces every month.

Véronique on her marriage had become a person of great interest to the rank and fashion of Limoges; she was a kind of godsend to the idle curiosity which finds such meager sustenance in the provinces. Véronique, who had so suddenly made her appearance, was a phenomenon the more closely

scrutinized on that account; but she always maintained the simple and unaffected attitude of an onlooker who watches manners and usages unknown to her, and seeks to conform to them. From the first she had been pronounced to have a good figure and a plain face, and now it was decided that she was good-natured, but stupid. She was learning so many things at once, she had so much to see and to hear, that her manner and talk gave some color to this accusation. A sort of torpor, moreover, had stolen over her which might well be mistaken for stupidity. Marriage, that "difficult profession" of wifehood, as she called it, in which the Church, the Code, and her own mother bade her practice the most complete resignation and perfect obedience, under pain of breaking all laws human and divine, and bringing about irreparable evils; marriage had plunged her into a bewilderment which grew to the pitch of vertigo and delirium. While she sat silent and reserved, she heard her own thoughts as plainly as the voices about her. For her "existence" had come to be extremely "difficult," to use the phrase of the dying Fontenelle, and ever more increasingly, till she grew frightened, she was afraid of herself. Nature recoiled from the orders of the soul; the body rebelled against the will. The poor snared creature wept on the bosom of the great Mother of the sorrowful and afflicted; she betook herself to the Church, she redoubled her fervor, she confided to her director the temptations which assailed her, she poured out her soul in prayer. Never at any time in her life did she fulfill her religious duties so zealously. The tempest of despair which filled her when she knew that she did not love her husband, flung her at the foot of the altar, where divine comforting voices spoke to her of patience. And she was patient and sweet, living in hope of the joys of motherhood.

"Did you see Mme. Graslin this morning?" the women asked among themselves. "Marriage does not agree with her; she looked quite ghastly."

"Yes; but would you have given a daughter of yours to a man like M. Graslin? Of course, if you marry such a monster, you suffer for it."

As soon as Graslin was fairly married, all the mothers who had assiduously hunted him for the past ten years directed spiteful speeches at him. Véronique grew thin, and became plain in good earnest. Her eyes were heavy, her features coarsened, she looked shamefaced and embarrassed, and wore the dreary, chilling expression, so repellent in bigoted devotees. A grayish tint overspread her complexion. She dragged herself languidly about during the first year of her marriage, usually the heyday of a woman's life. Before very long she sought for distraction in books, making use of her privilege as a married woman to read everything. She read Scott's novels, Byron's poems, the works of Schiller and Goethe, literature ancient and modern. She learned to ride, to dance, and draw. She made sepia drawings and sketches in water-color, eager to learn every device which women use to while away the tedium of solitary hours; in short, that second education which a woman nearly always undertakes for a man's sake and with his guidance, she undertook alone and for herself.

In the loftiness of a nature frank and free, brought up, as it were, in the desert, but fortified by religion, there was a wild grandeur, cravings which found no satisfaction in the provincial society in which she moved. All the books described love; she looked up from her books on life, and found no traces of passion there. Love lay dormant in her heart like the germs which wait for the sun. Through a profound melancholy, caused by constant brooding over herself, she came by dim and winding ways back to the last bright dreams of her girlhood. She dwelt more than once on the old romantic imaginings, and became the heroine and the theater of the drama. Once again she saw the island bathed in light, full of blossom and sweet scents, and all things grateful to her soul.

Not seldom her sad eyes wandered over her rooms with searching curiosity; the men she saw were all like Graslin; she watched them closely, and seemed to turn questioningly from them to their wives; but on the women's faces she saw no sign of her own secret trouble, and sadly and wearily she returned to her starting point, uneasy about herself.

Her highest thoughts met with a response in the books which she read of a morning, their wit pleased her; but in the evening she heard nothing but commonplace thoughts, which no one attempted to disguise by giving a witty turn to them; the talk around her was vapid and empty, or ran upon gossip and local news, which had no interest for her. She wondered sometimes at the warmth of discussions in which there was no question of sentiment, for her the very core of life. She was often seen gazing before her with fixed, wide eyes, thinking, doubtless, of hours which she had spent, while still a girl ignorant of life, in the room where everything had been in keeping with her fancies, and now lay in ruins, like Véronique's own existence. She shrank in pain from the thought of being drawn into the eddy of petty cares and interests like the other women among whom she was forced to live; her ill-concealed disdain of the littleness of her lot, visible upon her lips and brow, was taken for upstart insolence.

Mme. Graslin saw the coolness upon all faces, and felt a certain bitter tone in the talk. She did not understand the reason, for as yet she had not made a friend sufficiently intimate to enlighten or counsel her. Injustice, under which small natures chafe, compels loftier souls to return within themselves, and induces in them a kind of humility. Véronique blamed herself, and tried to discover where the fault lay. She tried to be gracious, she was pronounced to be insincere; she redoubled her kindness, and was said to be a hypocrite (her devotion giving color to the slander); she was lavish of hospitality, and gave dinners and dances, and was accused of pride. All Mme. Graslin's efforts were unsuccessful. She was misjudged and repulsed by the petty querulous pride of provincial coteries, where susceptibilities are always upon the watch for offenses; she went no more into society, and lived in the strictest retirement. The love in her heart turned to the Church. The great spirit in its feeble house of flesh saw in the manifold behests of Catholicism but so many stones set by the brink of the precipices of life, raised there by charitable hands to prop human weakness by the way. So every least reli-

gious observance was practiced with the most punctilious care.

Upon this, the Liberal party added M<sup>me</sup>. Grastin's name to the list of bigots in the town. She was classed among the Ultras, and party spirit strengthened the various grudges which Véronique had innocently stored up against herself, with its periodical exacerbations. But as she had nothing to lose by this ostracism, she went no more into society, and betook herself to her books, with the infinite resources which they opened to her. She thought over her reading, she compared methods, she increased the amount of her actual knowledge and her power of acquiring it, and by so doing opened the gateways of her mind to curiosity.

It was at this period of close and persistent study, while religion supported her, that she gained a friend in M. Grossetête, an old man whose real ability had not grown so rusty in the course of a life in a country town but that contact with a keen intelligence could still draw a few sparks from it. The kind soul was deeply interested in Véronique, who, in return for the mild warmth of the mellowed affection which age alone can give, put forth all the treasures of her soul; for him the splendid powers cultivated in secret first blossomed forth.

A fragment of a letter written at this time to M. Grossetête will describe the mental condition of a woman who one day should give proof of a firm temper and lofty nature:

"The flowers which you sent to me for the dance were very lovely, yet they suggested painful thoughts. The sight of that beauty, gathered by you to decorate a festival, and to fade on my breast and in my hair, made me think of other flowers born to die unseen in your woods, to shed sweet scent that no one breathes. Then I asked myself why I was dancing, why I had decked myself with flowers, just as I ask God why I am here in the world. You see, my friend, that in everything there lurks a snare for the unhappy, just as the drollest trifles bring the sick back



to their own sufferings. That is the worst of some troubles: they press upon us so constantly that they shape themselves into an idea which is ever present in our minds. An ever-present trouble ought surely to be a hallowed thought. You love flowers for their own sake; I love them as I love beautiful music. As I once told you, the secret of a host of things is hidden from me. . . . You, my old friend, for instance, have a passion for gardening. When you come back to town, teach me to share in this taste of yours; send me with a light footstep to my hothouse to feel the interest which you take in watching your plants grow. You seem to me to live and blossom with them, to take a delight in them, as in something of your own creation; to discover new colors, novel splendors, which come forth under your eyes, the result of your labors. I feel that the emptiness of my life is breaking my heart. For me, my hothouse is full of pining souls. The distress which I force myself to relieve saddens my very soul. I find some young mother without linen for her newborn babe, some old man starving, I make their troubles mine, and even when I have helped them, the feelings aroused in me by the sight of misery relieved are not enough to satisfy my soul. Oh! my friend, I feel that I have great powers asserting themselves in me, powers of doing evil, it may be, which nothing can crush—powers that the hardest commandments of religion cannot humble. When I go to see my mother, when I am quite alone among the fields, I feel that I must cry aloud, and I cry. My body is the prison in which one of the evil genii has pent up some moaning creature, until the mysterious word shall be uttered which shatters the cramping cell. But this comparison is not just. In my case it should be reversed. It is the body which is a prisoner, if I may make use of the expression. Does not religion occupy my soul? And the treasures gained by reading are constant food for the mind. Why do I long for any change, even if it comes as suffering—for any break in the enervating peace of my lot? Unless I find some sentiment to uphold me, some strong interest to cultivate, I feel that I shall drift towards the abyss where every idea grows hazy and meaningless, where character is ener-

vated, where the springs of one's being grow slack and inert, where I shall be no longer the woman Nature intended me to be. That is what my cries mean. . . . But you will not cease to send flowers to me because of this outcry of mine? Your friendship has been so sweet and pleasant a thing, that it has reconciled me with myself for several months. Yes, I feel happy when I think that you sometimes throw a friendly glance over the blossoming desert-place, my inner self; that the wanderer, half dead after her flight on the fiery steed of a dream, will meet with a kind word of greeting from you on her return."

Three years after Véronique's marriage, it occurred to Graslin that his wife never used the horses, and, a good opportunity offering itself, he sold them. The carriages were sold at the same time, the coachman was dismissed, and the cook from Paris transferred to the Bishop's establishment. A woman servant took his place. Graslin ceased to give his wife an allowance, saying that he would pay all the bills. He was the happiest man in the world when he met with no opposition from the wife who had brought him a million. There was not much merit, it is true, in Mme. Graslin's self-denial. She knew nothing of money, she had been brought up in ignorance of it as an indispensable element in life. Graslin found the sums which he had given to her lying in a corner of her desk; scarcely any of it had been spent. Véronique gave to the poor, her trousseau had been so large that as yet she had had scarcely any expenses for dress. Graslin praised Véronique to all Limoges as the pattern of wives.

The splendor of the furniture gave him pangs, so he had it all shrouded in covers. His wife's bedroom, boudoir, and dressing-room alone escaped this dispensation, an economical measure which economized nothing, for the wear and tear to the furniture is the same, covers or no covers.

He next took up his abode on the ground floor, where the counting-house and office had been established, so he began his old life again, and was as keen in pursuit of gain as

before. The Auvergnat banker thought himself a model husband because he breakfasted and dined with his wife, who carefully ordered the meals for him; but he was so extremely unpunctual, that he came in at the proper hour scarce ten times a month; and though, out of thoughtfulness, he asked her never to wait for him, Véronique always stayed to carve for him; she wanted to fulfill her wifely duties in some one visible manner. His marriage had not been a matter to which the banker gave much thought; his wife represented the sum of seven hundred and fifty thousand francs; he had not discovered that that wife shrank from him. Gradually he had left Mme. Graslin to herself, and became absorbed in business; and when he took it into his head to have a bed put for him in a room next to his private office, Véronique saw that his wishes were carried out at once.

So after three years of marriage this ill-assorted couple went their separate ways as before, and felt glad to return to them. The capitalist, owner now of eighteen hundred thousand francs, returned to his occupation of money making with all the more zest after the brief interval. His two clerks and the office boy were somewhat better lodged and a little better fed—that was all the difference between the past and the present. His wife had a cook and a waiting-maid (the two servants could not well be dispensed with), and no calls were made on Graslin's purse except for strict necessities.

And Véronique was happy in the turn things had taken; she saw in the banker's satisfaction a compensation for a separation for which she had never asked; it was impossible that Graslin should shrink from her as she shrank from him. She was half glad, half sorry of this secret divorce; she had looked forward to motherhood, which should bring a new interest into her life; but in spite of their mutual resignation, there was no child of the marriage as yet in 1828.

So Mme. Graslin, envied by all Limoges, led as lonely a life in her splendid home as formerly in her father's hovel; but the hopes and the childish joys of inexperience were gone. She lived in the ruins of her "castles in Spain," enlightened by sad experience, sustained by a devout faith,

busying herself for the poor of the district, whom she loaded with kindnesses. She made baby linen for them; she gave sheets and bedding to those who lay on straw; she went everywhere with her maid—a good Auvergnate whom her mother found for her. This girl attached herself body and soul to her mistress, and became a charitable spy for her, whose mission it was to find out trouble to soothe and distress to relieve. This life of busy benevolence and of punctilious performance of the duties enjoined by the Church was a hidden life, only known by the curés of the town who directed it, for Véronique took their counsel in all that she did, so that the money intended for the deserving poor should not be squandered by vice.

During these years Véronique found another friendship quite as precious to her and as warm as her friendship with old Grosscôte. She became one of the flock of the Abbé Dutheil, one of the vicars-general of the diocese. This priest belonged to the small minority among the French clergy who lean towards concession, who would fain associate the Church with the popular cause. By putting evangelical principles in practice, the Church should gain her old ascendancy over the people, whom she could then bind to the Monarchy. But the Abbé Dutheil's merits were unrecognized, and he was persecuted. Perhaps he had seen that it was hopeless to attempt to enlighten the Court of Rome and the clerical party; perhaps he had sacrificed his convictions at the bidding of his superiors; at any rate, he dwelt within the limits of the strictest orthodoxy, knowing the while that the mere expression of his convictions would close his way to a bishopric. A great and Christian humility, blended with a lofty character, distinguished this eminent churchman. He had neither pride nor ambition, and stayed at his post, doing his duty in the midst of peril. The Liberal party in the town, who knew nothing of his motives, quoted his opinions in support of their own, and reckoned him as "a patriot," a word which means "a revolutionary" for good Catholics. He was beloved by those below him, who did not dare to praise his worth; dreaded by his equals, who watched him narrowly; and a thorn in the side of his bishop. He

was not exactly persecuted, his learning and virtues were too well known; it was impossible to find fault with him freely, though he criticised the blunders in policy by which the Throne and the Church alternately compromised each other, and pointed out the inevitable results; like poor Cassandra, he was reviled by his own party before and after the fall which he predicted. Nothing short of a revolution was likely to shake the Abbé Dutheil from his place; he was a foundation stone in the Church, an unseen block of granite on which everything else rests. His utility was recognized, and—he was left in his place, like most of the real power of which mediocrity is jealous and afraid. If, like the Abbé de Lamennais, he had taken up the pen, he would probably have shared his fate; at him, too, the thunderbolts of Rome would have been launched.

In person the Abbé Dutheil was commanding. Something in his appearance spoke of a soul so profound that the surface is always calm and smooth. His height and spare frame did not mar the general effect of the outlines of his figure, which vaguely recalled those forms which Spanish painters loved best to paint for great monastic thinkers and dreamers—forms which Thorvaldsen in our own time has selected for his Apostles. His face, with the long, almost austere lines in it, which bore out the impression made by the straight folds of his garments, possessed the same charm which the sculptors of the Middle Ages discovered and recorded in the mystic figures about the doorways of their churches. His grave thoughts, grave words, and grave tones were all in keeping, and the expression of the Abbé's personality. At the first sight of the dark eyes, which austerity had surrounded with hollow shadowy circles; the forehead, yellowed like old marble; the bony outlines of the head and hands, no one could have expected to hear any voice but his, or any teaching but that which fell from his lips. It was this purely physical grandeur, in keeping with the moral grandeur of his nature, that gave him a certain seeming haughtiness and aloofness, belied, it is true, by his humility and his talk, yet unprepossessing in the first instance. In a higher position these qualities would have

been advantages which would have enabled him to gain a necessary ascendancy over the crowd—an ascendancy which it is quick to feel and to recognize; but he was a subordinate, and a man's superiors never pardon him for possessing the natural insignia of power, the majesty so highly valued in an older time, and often so signally lacking in modern upholders of authority.

His colleague, the Abbé de Grancour, the other vicar-general of the diocese, a blue-eyed stout little man with a florid complexion, worked willingly enough with the Abbé Dutheil, albeit their opinions were diametrically opposed; a curious phenomenon, which only a wily courtier will regard as a natural thing; but, at the same time, the Abbé de Grancour was very careful not to commit himself in any way which might cost him the favor of his bishop; the little man would have sacrificed anything (even convictions) to stand well in that quarter. He had a sincere belief in his colleague, he recognized his ability; in private he admitted his doctrines, while he condemned them in public; for men of his kind are attracted to a powerful character, while they fear and hate the superiority whose society they cultivate. "He would put his arms round my neck while he condemned me," said the Abbé Dutheil. The Abbé de Grancour had neither friends nor enemies, and was like to die a vicar-general. He gave out that he was drawn to Véronique's house by a wish to give a woman so benevolent and so devout the benefit of his counsels, and the Bishop signified his approval; but, in reality, he was only too delighted to spend an evening now and then in this way with the Abbé Dutheil.

From this time forward both priests became pretty constant visitors in Véronique's house; they used to bring her a sort of general report of any distress in the district, and talk over the best means of benefiting the poor morally and materially; but year by year M. Graslin drew the purse-strings closer and closer; for, in spite of ingenious excuses devised by his wife and Aline the maid, he suspected that all the money was not required for expenses of dress and housekeeping. He grew angry at last when he reckoned

up the amount which his wife gave away. He himself would go through the bills with the cook, he went minutely into the details of their expenditure, and showed himself the great administrator that he was by demonstrating conclusively from his own experience that it was possible to live in luxury on three thousand francs per annum. Whereupon he compounded the matter with his wife by allowing her a hundred francs a month, to be duly accounted for, pluming himself on the royal bounty of the grant. The garden, now handed over to him, was "done up" of a Sunday by the porter, who had a liking for gardening. After the gardener was dismissed, the conservatory was turned to account as a warehouse, where Graslin deposited the goods left with him as security for small loans. The birds in the aviary above the ice-house were left to starve, to save the expense of feeding them; and when at length a winter passed without a single frost, he took that opportunity of declining to pay for ice any longer. By the year 1828 every article of luxury was curtailed, and parsimony reigned undisturbed in the Hôtel Graslin.

During the first three years after Graslin's marriage, with his wife at hand to make him follow out the doctor's instructions, his complexion had somewhat improved; now it inflamed again, and became redder and more florid than in the past. So largely, at the same time, did his business increase, that the porter was promoted to be a clerk (as his master had been before him), and another Auvergnat had to be found to do the odd jobs of the Hôtel Graslin.

After four years of married life the woman who had so much wealth had not three francs to call her own. To the niggardliness of her parents succeeded the no less niggardly dispensation of her husband; and Mme. Graslin, whose benevolent impulses were checked, felt the need of money for the first time.

In the beginning of the year 1828 Véronique had recovered the bloom of health which had lent such beauty to the innocent girl who used to sit at the window in the old house in the Rue de la Cité. She had read widely since those days; she had learned to think and to express her thoughts;

the habit of forming accurate judgments had lent profundity to her features. The little details of social life had become familiar to her, she wore a fashionable toilette with the most perfect ease and grace. If chance brought her into a drawing-room at this time she found, not without surprise, that she was received with something like respectful esteem; this way of regarding her, like her reception, was due to the two vicars-general and old Grossetête. The Bishop and one or two influential people, hearing of Véronique's unwearied benevolence, had talked about this fair life hidden from the world, this violet perfumed with virtues, this blossom of unfeigned piety. So, all unknown to Mme. Graslin, a revolution had been wrought in her favor; one of those reactions so much the more lasting and sure because they are slowly effected. With this right-about-face in opinion Véronique became a power in the land. Her drawing-room was the resort of the luminaries of Limoges; the practical change was brought about by this means.

The young Vicomte de Granville came to the town at the end of that year, preceded by the ready-made reputation which awaits a Parisian on his arrival in the provinces. He had been appointed deputy public prosecutor to the Court of Limoges. A few days after his arrival he said, in answer to a sufficiently silly question, that Mme. Graslin was the cleverest, most amiable, and most distinguished woman in the city, and this at the prefect's "At Home," and before a whole roomful of people.

"And the most beautiful as well, perhaps?" suggested the Receiver-General's wife.

"There I do not venture to agree with you," he answered; "when you are present I am unable to decide. Mme. Graslin's beauty is not of a kind which should inspire jealousy in you, she never appears in broad daylight. Mme. Graslin is only beautiful for those whom she loves; you are beautiful for all eyes. If Mme. Graslin is deeply stirred, her face is transformed by its expression. It is like a landscape, dreary in winter, glorious in summer. Most people only see it in winter; but if you watch her while she talks with her friends on some literary or philosophical subject, or



upon some religious question which interests her, her face lights up, and suddenly she becomes another woman, a woman of wonderful beauty."

This declaration, a recognition of the same beautiful transfiguration which Véronique's face underwent as she returned to her place from the communion table, made a sensation in Limoges, for the new substitute (destined, it was said, to be Attorney-General one day) was the hero of the hour. In every country town a man a little above the ordinary level becomes for a shorter or longer time the subject of a craze, a sham enthusiasm to which the idol of the moment falls a victim. To these freaks of the provincial drawing-room we owe the local genius and the person who suffers from the chronic complaint of unappreciated superiority. Sometimes it is native talent which women discover and bring into fashion, but more frequently it is some outsider; and for once, in the case of the Vicomte de Granville, the homage was paid to genuine ability.

The Parisian found that Mme. Graslin was the only woman with whom he could exchange ideas or carry on a sustained and varied conversation; and a few months after his arrival, as the charm of her talk and manner gained upon him, he suggested to some of the prominent men in the town, and to the Abbé Duthcil among them, that they might make their party at whist of an evening in Mme. Graslin's drawing-room. So Véronique was at home to her friends for five nights in the week (two days she wished to keep free, she said, for her own concerns); and when the cleverest men in the town gathered about Mme. Graslin, others were not sorry to take brevet rank as wits by spending their evenings in her society. Véronique received the two or three distinguished military men stationed in the town or on the garrison staff. The entire freedom of discussion enjoyed by her visitors, the absolute discretion required of them, tacitly and by the adoption of the manners of the best society, combined to make Véronique exclusive and very slow to admit those who courted the honor of her society to her circle. Other women saw not without jealousy that the cleverest and pleasantest men gathered round Mme. Graslin,

and her power was the more widely felt in Limoges because she was exclusive. The four or five women whom she accepted were strangers to the district, who had accompanied their husbands from Paris, and looked on provincial tittle-tattle with disgust. If someone chanced to call who did not belong to the inner *cénacle*, the conversation underwent an immediate change, and with one accord all present spoke of indifferent things.

So the Hôtel Graslin became a sort of oasis in the desert where a chosen few sought relief in each other's society from the tedium of provincial life, a house where officials might discuss politics and speak their minds without fear of their opinions being reported, where all things worthy of mockery were fair game for wit and laughter, where everyone laid aside his professional uniform to give his natural character free play.

In the beginning of that year 1828, Mme. Graslin, whose girlhood had been spent in the most complete obscurity, who had been pronounced to be plain and stupid and a complete nullity, was now looked upon as the most important person in the town, and the most conspicuous woman in society. No one called upon her in the morning, for her benevolence and her punctuality in the performance of her duties of religion were well known. She almost invariably went to the first Mass, returning in time for her husband's early breakfast. He was the most unpunctual of men, but she always sat with him, for Graslin had learned to expect this little attention from his wife. As for Graslin, he never let slip an opportunity of praising her; he thought her perfection. She never asked him for money; he was free to pile up silver crown on silver crown, and to expand his field of operations. He had opened an account with the firm of Brézac; he had set sail upon a commercial sea, and the horizon was gradually widening out before him; his overstimulated interest, intent upon the great events of the green table called Speculation, kept him perpetually in the cold frenzied intoxication of the gambler.

During this happy year, and indeed until the beginning of the year 1829, Mme. Graslin's friends watched a strange

change passing in her, under their eyes; her beauty became really extraordinary, but the reasons of the change were never discovered. Her eyes seemed to be bathed in a soft liquid light, full of tenderness, the blue iris widened like an expanding flower as the dark pupils contracted. Memories and happy thoughts seemed to light up her brow, which grew whiter, like some ridge of snow in the dawn, her features seemed to regain their purity of outline in some refining fire within. Her face lost the feverish brown color which threatens inflammation of the liver, the malady of vigorous temperaments of troubled minds and thwarted affections. Her temples grew adorably fresh and youthful. Frequently her friends saw glimpses of the divinely fair face which a Raphael might have painted, the face which disease had covered with an ugly film, such as time spreads over the canvas of the great master. Her hands looked whiter, there was a delicate fullness in the rounded curves of her shoulders, her quick dainty movements displayed to the full the lissome grace of her form.

The women said that she was in love with M. de Granville, who, for that matter, paid assiduous court to her, though Véronique raised between them the barriers of a pious resistance. The deputy public prosecutor professed a respectful admiration for her which did not impose upon frequenters of her house. Clearer-sighted observers attributed to a different cause this change, which made Véronique still more charming to her friends. Any woman, however devout, could not but feel in her inmost soul that it was sweet to be so courted, to know the satisfaction of living in a congenial atmosphere, the delight of exchanging ideas (so great a relief in a tedious life), the pleasure of the society of well-read and agreeable men, and of sincere friendships, which grew day by day. It needed, perhaps, an observer still more profound, more acute, or more suspicious than any of those who came to the Hôtel Graslin to divine the untamed greatness, the strength of the woman of the people pent up in the depths of Véronique's nature. Now and again they might surprise her in a torpid mood, overcast by gloomy or merely pensive musings, but all her friends knew that she

carried many troubles in her heart; that, doubtless, in the morning she had been initiated into many sorrows, that she penetrated into dark places where vice is appalling by reason of its unblushing front. Not seldom, indeed, the Vicomte, soon promoted to be an *avocat général*, scolded her for some piece of blind benevolence discovered by him in the course of his investigations. Justice complained that Charity had paved the way to the police-court.

"Do you want money for some of your poor people?" old Grossetête had asked on this, as he took her hand in his. "I will share the guilt of your benefactions."

"It is impossible to make everybody rich," she answered, heaving a sigh.

An event occurred at the beginning of this year which was to change the whole current of Véronique's inner life, as well as the wonderful expression of her face, which henceforward became a portrait infinitely more interesting to a painter's eyes.

Graslin grew rather fidgety about his health, and to his wife's great despair left his ground-floor quarters and returned to her apartment to be tended. Soon afterwards Mme. Graslin's condition became a matter of town gossip; she was about to become a mother. Her evident sadness, mingled with joy, filled her friends' thoughts; they then divined that, in spite of her virtues, she was happiest when she lived apart from her husband. Perhaps she had had hopes for better things since the day when the Vicomte de Granville had declined to marry the richest heiress in Limousin, and still continued to pay court to her. Ever since that event the profound politicians who exercise the censorship of sentiments, and settle other people's business in the intervals of whist, had suspected the lawyer and young Mme. Graslin of basing hopes of their own on the banker's failing health—hopes which were brought to nothing by this unexpected development. It was a time in Véronique's life when deep distress of mind was added to the apprehensions of a first confinement, always more perilous, it is said, when a woman is past her first youth, but all through those days her friends showed themselves more thoughtful for her; there

was not one of them but made her feel in innumerable small ways what warmth there was in these friendships of hers, and how solid they had become.

## II

## TASCHERON

It was in the same year that Limoges witnessed the terrible spectacle and strange tragedy of the Tascheron case, in which the young Vicomte de Granville displayed the talents which procured him the appointment of public prosecutor at a later day.

An old man living in a lonely house on the outskirts of the Faubourg Saint-Étienne was murdered. A large orchard isolates the dwelling on the side of the town, on the other there is a pleasure garden, with a row of unused hot-houses at the bottom of it; then follow the open fields. The bank of the Vienne in this place rises up very steeply from the river, the little front garden slopes down to this embankment, and is bounded by a low wall surmounted by an open fence. Square stone posts are set along it at even distances, but the painted wooden railings are there more by way of ornament than as a protection to the property.

The old man, Pingret by name, a notorious miser, lived quite alone save for a servant, a country woman whom he employed in the garden. He trained his espaliers and pruned his fruit trees himself, gathering his crops and selling them in the town, and excelled in growing early vegetables for the market. The old man's niece and sole heiress, who had married a M. des Vanneaulx, a man of small independent means, and lived in Limoges, had many a time implored her uncle to keep a man as a protection to the place, pointing out to him that he would be able to grow more garden produce in several borders planted with standard fruit trees beneath which he now sowed millet and the like; but it was of no use, the old man would not hear of it. This contradiction in a miser gave rise to all sorts of conjectures in the houses where the Vanneaulx spent their evenings. The

most divergent opinions had more than once divided parties at boston. Some knowing folk came to the conclusion that there was a treasure hidden under the growing luzern.

"If I were in Mme. des Vanneaulx's place," remarked one pleasant gentleman, "I would not worry my uncle, I know. If somebody murders him, well and good; somebody will murder him. I should come in for the property."

Mme. des Vanneaulx, however, thought differently. As a manager at the Théâtre-Italien implorcs the tenor who "draws" a full house to be very careful to wrap up his throat, and gives him his cloak when the singer has forgotten his overcoat, so did Mme. des Vanneaulx try to watch over her relative. She had offered little Pingret a magnificent yard dog, but the old man sent the animal back again by Jeanne Malassis, his servant.

"Your uncle has no mind to have one more mouth to feed up at our place," said the handmaid to Mme. des Vanneaulx.

The event proved that his niece's fears had been but too well founded. Pingret was murdered one dark night in the patch of luzern, whither he had gone, no doubt, to add a few louis to a pot full of gold. The servant, awakened by the sounds of the struggle, had the courage to go to the old man's assistance, and the murderer found himself compelled to kill her also, lest she should bear witness against him. This calculation of probable risks, which nearly always prompts a man guilty of one murder to add another to his account, is one unfortunate result of the capital sentence which he beholds looming in the distance.

The double crime was accompanied by strange circumstances, which told as strongly for the defense as for the prosecution. When the neighbors had seen nothing of Pingret nor of the servant the whole morning; when, as they came and went, they looked through the wooden railings and saw that the doors and windows (contrary to wont) were still barred and fastened, the thing began to be bruited abroad through the Faubourg Saint-Étienne, till it reached Mme. des Vanneaulx in the Rue des Cloches. Mme. des Vanneaulx, whose mind always ran on horrors, sent for the

police, and the doors were broken open. In the four patches of luzern there were four gaping holes in the earth, surrounded by rubbish, and strewn with broken shards of the pots which had been full of gold the night before. In two of the holes, which had been partly filled up, they found the bodies of old Pingret and Jeanne Malassis, buried in their clothes; she, poor thing, had run out barefooted in her nightdress.

While the public prosecutor, the commissary, and the examining magistrate took down all these particulars, the unlucky des Vanneaulx collected the scraps of broken pottery, put them together, and calculated the amount the jars should have held. The authorities, perceiving the common-sense of this proceeding, estimated the stolen treasure at a thousand pieces per pot; but what was the value of those coins? Had they been forty or forty-eight franc pieces, twenty-four or twenty francs? Every creature in Limoges who had expectations felt for the des Vanneaulx in this trying situation. The sight of those fragments of crockery ware which once held gold gave a lively stimulus to Limousin imaginations. As for little Pingret, who often came to sell his vegetables in the market himself, who lived on bread and onions, and did not spend three hundred francs in a year, who never did anybody a good turn, nor any harm either, no one regretted him in the least—he had never done a pennyworth of good to the Faubourg Saint-Étienne. As for Jeanne Malassis, her heroism was considered to be ill-timed; the old man if he had lived would have grudged her reward; altogether, her admirers were few compared with the number of those who remarked, “I should have slept soundly in her place, I know!”

Then the curious and the next-of-kin were made aware of the inconsistencies of certain misers. The police, when they came to draw up the report, could find neither pen nor ink in the bare, cold, dismal, tumbledown house. The little old man’s horror of expense was glaringly evident, in the great holes in the roof, which let in rain and snow as well as light; in the moss-covered cracks which rent the walls;

in the rotting doors ready to drop from their hinges at the least shock, the unoiled paper which did duty as glass in the windows. There was not a window curtain in the house, not a looking-glass over the mantel shelves; the grates were chiefly remarkable for the absence of fire-irons and the accumulation of damp soot, a sort of varnish over the handful of sticks or the log of wood which lay on the hearth. And as to the furniture—a few crippled chairs and maimed arm-chairs, two beds, hard and attenuated (Time had adorned old Pingret's bed curtains with open-work embroidery of a bold design), one or two cracked pots and riveted plates, a worm-eaten bureau, where the old man used to keep his garden seeds, household linen thick with darns and patches,—the furniture, in short, consisted of a mass of rags, which had only a sort of life kept in them by the spirit of their owner, and now that he was gone, they dropped to pieces and crumbled to powder. At the first touch of the brutal hands of the police officers and infuriated next-of-kin they evaporated, Heaven knows how, and came to nameless ruin and an indefinable end. They were not. Before the terrors of a public auction they vanished away.

For a long time the greater part of the inhabitants of the capital of Limousin continued to take an interest in the hard case of the worthy des Vanneaulx, who had two children; but as soon as justice appeared to have discovered the perpetrator of the crime, this person absorbed all their attention, he became the hero of the day, and the des Vanneaulx were relegated to the obscurity of the background.

Towards the end of the month of March, Mme. Graslin had already felt the discomforts incidental to her condition, which could no longer be concealed. By that time inquiries were being made into the crime committed in the Faubourg Saint-Étienne, but the murderer was still at large. Véronique received visitors in her bedroom, whither her friends came for their game of whist. A few days later Mme. Graslin kept her room altogether. More than once already she had been seized with the unaccountable fancies commonly attributed to women with child. Her mother came almost



every day to see her; the two spent whole hours in each other's society.

It was nine o'clock. The card tables were neglected, everyone was talking about the murder and the des Van-neaulx, when the Vicomte de Granville came in.

"We have caught the man who murdered old Pingret!" he cried in high glee.

"And who is it?" The question came from all sides.

"One of the workmen in a porcelain factory, a man of exemplary conduct, and in a fair way to make his fortune.—He is one of your husband's old workmen," he added, turning to Mme. Graslin.

"Who is it?" Véronique asked faintly.

"Jean-François Tascheron."

"The unfortunate man!" she exclaimed. "Yes. I remember seeing him several times. My poor father recommended him to me as a valuable hand——"

"He left the place before Sauviat died," remarked old Mme. Sauviat; "he went over to the MM. Philippart to better himself.—But is my daughter well enough to hear about this?" she added, looking at Mme. Graslin, who was as white as the sheets.

After that evening old Mother Sauviat left her house, and in spite of her seventy years, installed herself as her daughter's nurse. She did not leave Véronique's room. No matter at what hour Mme. Graslin's friends called to see her, they found the old mother sitting heroically at her post by the bedside, busied with her eternal knitting, brooding over her Véronique as in the days of the smallpox, answering for her child, and sometimes denying her to visitors. The love between the mother and daughter was so well known in Limoges that people took the old woman's ways as a matter of course.

A few days later, when the Vicomte de Granville began to give some of the details of the Tascheron case, in which the whole town took an eager interest, thinking to interest the invalid, La Sauviat cut him short by asking if he meant to give Mme. Graslin bad dreams again, but Véronique

begged M. de Granville to go on, fixing her eyes on his face. So it fell out that Mme. Graslin's friends heard in her house the result of the preliminary examination, soon afterwards made public, at first-hand from the *avocat général*. Here, in a condensed form, is the substance of the indictment which was being drawn up by the prosecution:

Jean-François Tascheron was the son of a small farmer burdened with a large family, who lived in the township of Montégnac. Twenty years before the perpetration of this crime, whose memory still lingers in Limousin, Canton Montégnac bore a notoriously bad character. It was a proverb in the Criminal Court of Limoges that fifty out of every hundred convictions came from the Montégnac district. Since 1816, two years after the arrival of the new curé, M. Bonnet, Montégnac lost its old reputation, and no longer sent up its contingent to the Assizes. The change was generally set down to M. Bonnet's influence in the commune, which had once been a perfect hotbed of bad characters who gave trouble in all the country round about. Jean-François Tascheron's crime suddenly restored Montégnac to its former unenviable pre-eminence. It happened, singularly enough, that the Tascherons had been almost the only family in the countryside which had not departed from the old exemplary traditions and religious habits now fast dying out in country places. In them the curé had found a moral support and basis of operations, and naturally he thought a great deal of them. The whole family were hard workers, remarkable for their honesty and the strong affection that bound them to each other; Jean-François Tascheron had had none but good examples set before him at home. A praiseworthy ambition had brought him to Limoges. He meant to make a little fortune honestly by a handicraft, and left the township, to the regret of his relations and friends, who were much attached to him.

His conduct during his two years of apprenticeship was admirable; apparently no irregularity in his life had foreshadowed the hideous crime for which he forfeited his life.

The leisure which other workmen wasted in the wineshop and debauches, Tascheron spent in study.

Justice in the provinces has plenty of time on her hands, but the most minute investigation threw no light whatever on the secrets of this existence. The landlady of Jean-François's humble lodging, skillfully questioned, said that she had never had such a steady young man as a lodger. He was pleasant-spoken and good-tempered, almost gay, as you might say. About a year ago a change seemed to come over him. He would stop out all night several times a month, and often for several nights at a time. She did not know whereabouts in the town he spent those nights. Still, she had sometimes thought, judging by the mud on his boots, that her lodger had been somewhere out in the country. He used to wear pumps, too, instead of hobnailed boots, although he was going out of the town, and before he went he used to shave and scent himself, and put on clean clothes.

The examining magistrate carried his investigations to such a length that inquiries were made in houses of ill fame and among licensed prostitutes, but no one knew anything of Jean-François Tascheron; other inquiries made among the class of factory operatives and shop-girls met with no better success; none of those whose conduct was light had any relations with the accused.

A crime without any motive whatever is inconceivable, especially when the criminal's bent was apparently towards self-improvement, while his ambitions argued higher ideals and sense superior to that of other workmen. The whole criminal department, like the examining magistrate, were fain to find a motive for the murder in a passion for play on Tascheron's part; but after minute investigation, it was proved that the accused had never gambled in his life.

From the very first Jean-François took refuge in a system of denial which could not but break down in the face of circumstantial evidence when his case should come before a jury; but his manner of defending himself suggested the intervention of some person well acquainted with the law, or gifted with no ordinary intelligence. The evidence of his guilt, as in most similar cases, was at once unconvincing

and yet too strong to be set aside. The principal points which told against Tascheron were four—his absence from home on the night of the murder (he would not say where he spent that night, and scorned to invent an *alibi*); a shred of his blouse, torn without his knowledge during the struggle with the poor servant-girl, and blown by the wind into the tree where it was found; the fact that he had been seen hanging about the house that evening by people in the suburb, who would not have remembered this but for the crime which followed; and lastly, a false key which he had made to fit the lock of the garden gate, which was entered from the fields. It had been hidden rather ingeniously in one of the holes, some two feet below the surface. M. des Vanneaulx had come upon it while digging to see whether by chance there might be a second hoard beneath the first. The police succeeded in finding out the man who supplied the steel, the vise, and the key-file. This had been their first clew, it put them on Tascheron's track, and finally they arrested him on the limits of the department in a wood where he was waiting for the diligence. An hour later, and he would have been on his way to America. Moreover, in spite of the care with which the footprints had been erased in the trampled earth and on the muddy road, the rural policeman had found the marks of thin shoes, clear and unmistakable, in the soil. Tascheron's lodgings were searched, and a pair of pumps were found which exactly corresponded with the impress, a fatal coincidence which confirmed the curious observations of his landlady.

Then the criminal investigation department saw another influence at work in the crime, and a second and perhaps a prime mover in the case. Tascheron must have had an accomplice, if only for the reason that it was impossible for one man to take away such a weight of coin. No man, however strong, could carry twenty-five thousand francs in gold very far. If each of the pots had held so much, he must have made four journeys. Now, a singular accident determined the very hour when the deed was done. Jeanne Malassis, springing out of bed in terror at her master's shrieks, had overturned the table on which her watch lay (the one

present which the miser had made her in five years). The fall had broken the mainspring, and stopped the hands at two o'clock.

In mid-March, the time of the murder, the sun rises between five and six in the morning. So on the hypothesis traced out by the police and the department, it was clearly impossible that Tascheron should have carried off the money unaided and alone, even for a short distance, in the time. The evident pains which the man had taken to erase other footprints to the neglect of his own, also indicated an unknown assistant.

Justice, driven to invent some reason for the crime, decided on a frantic passion for some woman, and as she was not to be found among the lower classes, forensic sagacity looked higher.

Could it be some woman of the bourgeoisie who, feeling sure of the discretion of a lover of so puritanical a cut, had read with him the opening chapters of a romance which had ended in this ugly tragedy? There were circumstances in the case which almost bore out this theory. The old man had been killed by blows from a spade. The murder, it seemed, was the result of chance, a sudden fortuitous development, and not a part of a deliberate plan. The two lovers might perhaps have concerted the theft, but not the second crime. Then Tascheron the lover and Pingret the miser had crossed each other's paths, and in the thick darkness of night two inexorable passions met on the same spot, both attracted thither by gold.

Justice devised a new plan for obtaining light on these dark data. Jean-François had a favorite sister; her they arrested and examined privately, hoping in this way to come by a knowledge of the mysteries of her brother's private life. Denise Tascheron denied all knowledge of his affairs; prudence dictating a system of negative answers which led her questioners to suspect that she really knew the reasons of the crime. Denise Tascheron, as a matter of fact, knew nothing whatever about it, but for the rest of her days she was to be under a cloud in consequence of her detention.

The accused showed a spirit very unusual in a working man. He was too clever for the cleverest "sheep of the prisons" with whom he came in contact—though he did not discover that he had to do with a spy. The keener intelligences among the magistracy saw in him a murderer through passion, not through necessity, like the common herd of criminals who pass by way of the petty sessions and the hulks to a capital charge. He was shrewdly plied with questions put with this idea; but the man's wonderful discretion left the magistrates much where they were before. The romantic but plausible theory of a passion for a woman of higher rank, once admitted, insidious questions were suddenly asked more than once; but Jean-François's discretion issued victorious from all the mental tortures which the ingenuity of an examining magistrate could inflict.

As a final expedient, Tascheron was told that the person for whom he had committed the crime had been discovered and arrested; but his face underwent no change, he contented himself with the ironical retort, "I should be very glad to see that person!"

When these details became known, there were plenty of people who shared the magistrate's suspicions, confirmed to all appearance by the behavior of the accused, who maintained the silence of a savage. An all-absorbing interest attached to a young man who had come to be a problem. Everyone will understand how the public curiosity was stimulated by the facts of the case, and how eagerly reports of the examination were followed; for in spite of all the probings of the police, the case for the prosecution remained on the brink of a mystery, which the authorities did not dare to penetrate, beset with dangers as it was. In some cases a half-certainty is not enough for the magistracy. So it was hoped that the buried truth would arise and come to light at the great day of the Assizes, an occasion when criminals frequently lose their heads.

It happened that M. Graslin was on the jury empaneled for the occasion, and Véronique could not but hear through him or through M. de Granville the whole story of a trial which kept Limousin, and indeed all France, in excitement

for a fortnight. The behavior of the prisoner at the bar justified the romances founded on the conjectures of justice which were current in the town; more than once his eyes were turned searchingly on the bevy of women privileged to enjoy the spectacle of a sensational drama in real life. Every time that the clear impenetrable gaze was turned on the fashionable audience, it produced a flutter of consternation, so greatly did every woman fear lest she might seem to inquisitive eyes in the Court to be the prisoner's partner in guilt.

The useless efforts of the criminal investigation department were then made public, and Limoges was informed of the precautions taken by the accused to insure the complete success of his crime.

Some months before that fatal night, Jean-François had procured a passport for North America. Clearly he had meant to leave France. Clearly, therefore, the woman in the case must be married; for there was, of course, no object to be gained by eloping with a young girl. Perhaps it was a desire to maintain the fair unknown in luxury which had prompted the crime; but, on the other hand, a search through the registers of the administration had discovered that no passport for that country had been made out in a woman's name. The police had even investigated the registers in Paris as well as those of the neighboring prefectures, but fruitlessly.

As the case proceeded, every least detail brought to light revealed profound forethought on the part of a man of no ordinary intelligence. While the most virtuous ladies of Limousin explained the sufficiently inexplicable use of evening shoes for a country excursion on muddy roads and heavy soil, by the plea that it was necessary to spy upon old Pingret; the least coxcombically given of men were delighted to point out how eminently a pair of thin pumps favored noiseless movements about a house, scaling windows, and stealing along corridors.

Evidently Jean-François Tascheron and his mistress, a young, romantic, and beautiful woman (for everyone drew a superb portrait of the lady), had contemplated forgery,

and the words "and wife" were to be filled in after his name on the passport.

Card parties were broken up during these evenings by malicious conjectures and comments. People began to cast about for the names of women who went to Paris during March 1829, or of others who might be supposed to have made preparations openly or secretly for flight. The trial supplied Limoges with a second Fualdès case, with an unknown Mme. Manson by way of improvement on the first. Never, indeed, was any country town so puzzled as Limoges after the Court rose each day. People's very dreams turned on the trial. Everything that transpired raised the accused in their eyes; his answers, skillfully turned over and over, expanded and edited, supplied a theme for endless argument. One of the jury asked, for instance, why Tascheron had taken a passport for America, to which the prisoner replied that he meant to open a porcelain factory there. In this way he screened his accomplice without quitting his line of defense, and supplied conjecture with a plausible and sufficient motive for the crime in this ambition of his.

In the thick of these disputes, it was impossible that Véronique's friends should not also try to account for Tascheron's close reserve. One evening she seemed better than usual. The doctor had prescribed exercise; and that very morning Véronique, leaning on her mother's arm, had walked out as far as Mme. Sauviat's cottage, and rested there a while. When she came home again, she tried to sit up until her husband returned, but Graslin was late, and did not come back from the Court till eight o'clock; his wife waited on him at dinner after her custom, and in this way could not but hear the discussion between himself and his friends.

"We should have known more about this if my poor father were still alive," said Véronique, "or perhaps the man would not have committed the crime—— But I notice that you have all of you taken one strange notion into your heads! You will have it that there is a woman at the bottom of this business (as far as that goes I myself am of your opinion), but why do you think that she is a married woman?



Why cannot he have loved some girl whose father and mother refused to listen to him?"

"Sooner or later a young girl might have been legitimately his," returned M. de Granville. "Tascheron is not wanting in patience; he would have had time to make an independence honestly; he could have waited until the girl was old enough to marry without her parents' consent."

"I did not know that such a marriage was possible," said Mme. Graslin. "Then how is it that no one had the least suspicion of it, here in a place where everybody knows the affairs of everybody else, and sees all that goes on in his neighbor's house? Two people cannot fall in love without at any rate seeing each other or being seen of each other! What do you lawyers think?" she continued, looking the *avocat général* full in the eyes.

"We all think that the woman must be the wife of some tradesman, a man in business."

"I am of a totally opposite opinion," said Mme. Graslin. "That kind of woman has not sentiments sufficiently lofty," a retort which drew all eyes upon her. Everyone waited for the explanation of the paradox.

"At night," she said, "when I do not sleep, or when I lie in bed in the daytime, I cannot help thinking over this mysterious business, and I believe I can guess Tascheron's motives. These are my reasons for thinking that it is a girl, and not a woman in the case. A married woman has other interests, if not other feelings; she has a divided heart in her, she cannot rise to the full height of the exaltation inspired by a love so passionate as this. She must never have borne a child if she is to conceive a love in which maternal instincts are blended with those which spring from desire. It is quite clear that some woman who wished to be a sustaining power to him has loved this man. That unknown woman must have brought to her love the genius which inspires artists and poets, ay, and women also, but in another form, for it is a woman's destiny to create, not things, but men. Our creations are our children, our children are our pictures, our books and statues. Are we not artists when we shape their lives from the first? So I am

sure that if she is not a girl, she is not a mother; I would stake my head upon it. Lawyers should have a woman's instinct to apprehend the infinite subtle touches which continually escape them in so many cases.

"If I had been your substitute," she continued, turning to M. de Granville, "we should have discovered the guilty woman, always supposing that she is guilty. I think, with M. l'Abbé Dathuil, that the two lovers had planned to go to America, and to live there on poor Pingret's money, as they had none of their own. The theft, of course, led to the murder, the usual fatal consequence of the fear of detection and death. "And it would be worthy of you," she added, with a suppliant glance at the young lawyer, "to withdraw the charge of malice aforethought; you would save the miserable man's life. He is so great in spite of his crime, that he would perhaps expiate his sins by some magnificent repentance. The works of repentance should be taken into account in the deliberations of justice. In these days are there no better ways of atoning an offense than by the loss of a head, or by founding, as in olden times, a Milan cathedral?"

"Madame, your ideas are sublime," returned the lawyer; "but if the averment of malice aforethought were withdrawn, Tascheron would still be tried for his life; and it is a case of aggravated theft, it was committed at night, the walls were scaled, the premises broken into——"

"Then, do you think he will be condemned?" she asked, lowering her eyelids.

"I do not doubt it. The prosecution has the best of it."

A light shudder ran through Mme. Graslin. Her dress rustled.

"I feel cold," she said.

She took her mother's arm, and went to bed.

"She is much better to-day," said her friends.

The next morning Véronique was at death's door. She smiled at her doctor's surprise at finding her in an almost dying state.

"Did I not tell you that the walk would do me no good?" she asked.

Ever since the opening of the trial there had been no trace of either swagger or hypocrisy in Tascheron's attitude. The doctor, always with a view to diverting his patient's mind, tried to explain this attitude out of which the counsel for the defense made capital for his client. The counsel's cleverness, the doctor opined, had dazzled the accused, who imagined that he should escape the capital sentence. Now and then an expression crossed his face which spoke plainly of hopes of some coming happiness greater than mere acquittal or reprieve. The whole previous life of this man of twenty-three was such a flat contradiction to the deeds which brought it to a close that his champions put forward his behavior as a conclusive argument. In fact, the clews spun by the police into a stout hypothesis fit to hang a man, dwindled so pitifully when woven into the romance of the defense, that the prisoner's counsel fought for his client's life with some prospect of success. To save him he shifted the ground of the combat, and fought the battle out on the question of malice aforethought. It was admitted, without prejudice, that the robbery had been planned beforehand, but contended that the double murder had been the result of an unexpected resistance in both cases. The issue looked doubtful; neither side had made good their case.

When the doctor went, the *avocat général* came in as usual to see Véronique before he went to the Court.

"I have read the counsel's speeches yesterday," she told him. "To-day the other side will reply. I am so very much interested in the prisoner, that I should like him to be saved. Could you not forego a triumph for once in your life? Let the counsel for the defense gain the day. Come, make me a present of this life, and—perhaps—some day mine shall be yours—— There is a doubt after that fine speech of Tascheron's counsel; well, then, why not——"

"Your voice is quivering——" said the Vicomte, almost taken by surprise.

"Do you know why?" she asked. "My husband has just pointed out a coincidence—hideous for a sensitive nature like mine—a thing that is like to cause me my death. You

will give the order for his head to fall just about the time when my child will be born."

"Can I reform the Code?" asked the public prosecutor.

"There, go! You do not know how to love!" she answered, and closed her eyes.

She lay back on her pillow, and dismissed the lawyer with an imperative gesture.

M. Graslin pleaded hard, but in vain, for an acquittal, advancing an argument, first suggested to him by his wife, and taken up by two of his friends on the jury: "If we spare the man's life, the des Vanneaulx will recover Pingret's money." This irresistible argument told upon the jury, and divided them—seven for acquittal as against five. As they failed to agree, the President and assessors were obliged to add their suffrages, and they were on the side of the minority. Jean-François Tascheron was found guilty of murder.

When sentence was passed, Tascheron burst into a blind fury, natural enough in a man full of strength and life, but seldom seen in Court when it is an innocent man who is condemned. It seemed to everyone who saw it that the drama was not brought to an end by the sentence. So obstinate a struggle (as often happens in such cases) gave rise to two diametrically opposite opinions as to the guilt of the central figure in it. Some saw oppressed innocence in him, others a criminal justly punished. The Liberal party felt it incumbent upon them to believe in Tascheron's innocence; it was not so much conviction on their part as a desire to annoy those in office.

"What?" cried they. "Is a man to be condemned because his foot happens to suit the size of a footmark?—Because, forsooth, he was not at his lodgings at the time? (As if any young fellow would not die sooner than compromise a woman!)—Because he borrowed tools and bought steel?—(for it has not been proved that he made the key).—Because someone finds a blue rag in a tree, where old Pingret very likely put it himself to scare the sparrows, and it happens to match a slit made in the blouse?—Take a man's life on such grounds as these! And, after all, Jean-François

has denied every charge, and the prosecution did not produce any witness who had seen him commit the crime."

Then they fell to corroborating, amplifying, and paraphrasing the speeches made by the prisoner's counsel and his line of defense. As for Pingret; what was Pingret? A money-box which had been broken open; so said the free-thinkers.

A few so-called Progressives, who did not recognize the sacred laws of property (which the Saint-Simonians had already attacked in the abstract region of Economical Theory), went further still.

"Old Pingret," said these, "was the prime author of the crime. The man was robbing his country by hoarding the gold. What a lot of businesses that idle capital might have fertilized! He had thwarted industry; he was properly punished."

As for the servant-girl, they were sorry for her; and Denise, who had baffled the ingenuity of the lawyers, the girl who never opened her mouth at the trial without long pondering over what she meant to say, excited the keenest interest. She became a figure comparable, in another sense, with Jeanie Deans, whom she resembled in charm of character, modesty, in her religious nature and personal comeliness. So François Tascheron still continued to excite the curiosity not merely of Limoges, but of the whole department. Some romantic women openly expressed their admiration of him.

"If there is a love for some woman above him at the bottom of all this," said these ladies, "the man is certainly no ordinary man. You will see that he will die bravely!"

Would he confess? Would he keep silence? Bets were taken on the question. Since that outburst of rage with which he received his doom (an outburst which might have had a fatal ending for several persons in court but for the intervention of the police), the criminal threatened violence indiscriminately to all and sundry who came near him, and with the ferocity of a wild beast. The jailer was obliged to put him in a strait waistcoat; for if he was dangerous to others, he seemed quite as likely to attempt his own life.

Tascheron's despair, thus restrained from all overt acts of violence, found a vent in convulsive struggles which frightened the warders, and in language which, in the Middle Ages, would have been set down to demoniacal possession.

He was so young that women were moved to pity that a life so filled with an all-engrossing love should be cut off. Quite recently, and as if written for the occasion, Victor Hugo's somber elegy and vain plea for the abolition of the death penalty (that support of the fabric of society) had appeared, and *Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné* was the order of the day in all conversations. Then finally, above the boards of the Assizes, set, as it were, upon a pedestal, rose the invisible mysterious figure of a woman, standing there with her feet dipped in blood; condemned to suffer heart-rending anguish, yet outwardly to live in unbroken household peace. At her everyone pointed the finger—and yet, they almost admired that Limousin Medea with the inscrutable brow and the heart of steel in her white breast. Perhaps she dwelt in the home of this one or that, and was the sister, cousin, wife, or daughter of such an one. What a horror in their midst! It is in the domain of the Imagination, according to Napoleon, that the power of the Unknown is incalculably great.

As for the des Vanneaulx's hundred thousand francs, all the efforts of the police had not succeeded in recovering the money; and the criminal's continued silence was a strange defeat for the prosecution. M. de Granville (in the place of the public prosecutor then absent at the Chamber of Deputies) tried the commonplace stratagem of inducing the condemned man to believe that the penalty might be commuted if a full confession were made. But the lawyer had scarcely showed himself before the prisoner greeted him with furious yells, and epileptic contortions, and eyes ablaze with anger and regret that he could not kill his enemy. Justice could only hope that the Church might effect something at the last moment. Again and again the des Vanneaulx applied to the Abbé Pascal, the prison chaplain. The Abbé Pascal was not deficient in the peculiar quality which gains a priest a hearing from a prisoner. In the name of religion, he

braved Tascheron's transports of rage, and strove to utter a few words amidst the storms that convulsed that powerful nature. But the struggle between spiritual paternity and the tempest of uncontrolled passions was too much for poor Abbé Pascal; he retired from it defeated and worn out.

"That is a man who has found his heaven here on earth," the old priest murmured softly to himself.

Then little Mme. des Vanneaulx thought of approaching the criminal herself, and took counsel of her friends. The Sieur des Vanneaulx talked of compromise. Being at his wits' end, he even betook himself to M. de Granville, and suggested that he (M. de Granville) should intercede with the King for his uncle's murderer if only, *if only*, the murderer would hand over those hundred thousand francs to the proper persons. The *avocat général* retorted that the King's Majesty would not stoop to haggle with criminals. Then the des Vanneaulx tried Tascheron's counsel, offering him twenty per cent. on the total amount as an inducement to recover it for them. This lawyer was the one creature whom Tascheron could see without flying into a fury; him, therefore, the next-of-kin empowered to offer ten per cent. to the murderer, to be paid over to the man's family. But in spite of the mutilations which these beavers were prepared to make in their heritage, in spite of the lawyer's eloquence, Tascheron continued obdurate. Then the des Vanneaulx, waxing wroth, anathematized the condemned man and called down curses upon his head.

"He is not only a murderer, he has no sense of decency!" cried they, in all seriousness, ignorant though they were of the famous *Plaint of Fualdès*. The Abbé Pascal had totally failed, the application for a reversal of judgment seemed likely to succeed no better, the man would go to the guillotine, and then all would be lost.

"What good will our money be to him where he is going?" they wailed. "A murder you can understand, but to steal a thing that is of no use! The thing is inconceivable. What times we live in, to be sure, when people of quality take an interest in such a bandit! He does not deserve it."

"He has very little sense of honor," said Mme. des Vanneaulx.

"Still, suppose that giving up the money should compromise his sweetheart!" suggested an old maid.

"We would keep his secret," cried the Sieur des Vanneaulx.

"But then you would become accessories after the fact," objected a lawyer.

"Oh! the scamp!" This was the Sieur des Vanneaulx's conclusion of the whole matter.

The des Vanneaulx's debates were reported with some amusement to Mme. Graslin by one of her circle, a very clever woman, a dreamer and idealist, for whom everything must be faultless. The speaker regretted the condemned man's fury; she would have had him cold, calm, and dignified.

"Do you not see," said Véronique, "that he is thrusting temptation aside and baffling their efforts? He is deliberately acting like a wild beast."

"Besides," objected the Parisienne in exile, "he is not a gentleman, he is only a common man."

"If he had been a gentleman, it would have been all over with that unknown woman long ago," Mme. Graslin answered.

These events, twisted and tortured in drawing-rooms and family circles, made to bear endless constructions, picked to pieces by the most expert tongues in the town, all contributed to invest the criminal with a painful interest, when, two months later, the appeal for mercy was rejected by the Supreme Court. How would he bear himself in his last moments? He had boasted that he would make so desperate a fight for his life that it was impossible that he should lose it. Would he confess?—Would his conduct belie his language?—Which side would win their wagers?—Are you going to be there?—Are you not going?—How are we to go? As a matter of fact, the distance from the prison of Limoges to the place of execution is very short, sparing the dreadful ordeal of a long transit to the prisoner, but also limiting the number of fashionable spectators. The prison is in the same building as the Palais de Justice, at the corner



of the Rue du Palais and the Rue du Pont-Hérissou. The Rue du Palais is the direct continuation of the short Rue de Mont-à-Regret which leads to the Place d'Aïne or des Arènes, where executions take place (hence, of course, its name). The way, as has been said, is very short, consequently there are not many houses along it, and but few windows. What persons of fashion would care to mingle with the crowd in the square on such an occasion?

But the execution expected from day to day was day after day put off, to the great astonishment of the town, and for the following reasons. The pious resignation of the greatest scoundrels on their way to death is a triumph reserved for the Church, and a spectacle which seldom fails to impress the crowd. Setting the interests of Christianity totally aside (although this is a principle never lost sight of by the Church), the condemned man's repentance is too strong a testimony to the power of religion for the clergy not to feel that a failure on these conspicuous occasions is a heartbreaking misfortune. This feeling was aggravated in 1829, for party spirit ran high and poisoned everything, however small, which had any bearing on politics. The Liberals were in high glee at the prospect of a public collapse of the "priestly party," an epithet invented by Montlosier, a Royalist who went over to the Constitutionals and was carried by his new associates further than he intended. A party, in its corporate capacity, is guilty of disgraceful actions which in an individual would be infamous, and so it happens that when one man stands out conspicuous as the expression and incarnation of that party, in the eyes of the crowd he is apt to become a Robespierre, a Judge Jeffreys, a Laubardemont—a sort of altar of expiation to which others equally guilty attach *ex votos* in secret.

There was an understanding between the episcopal authorities and the police authorities, and still the execution was put off, partly to secure a triumph for religion, but quite as much for another reason—by the aid of religion justice hoped to arrive at the truth. The power of the public prosecutor, however, had its limits; sooner or later the sentence must be carried out; and the very Liberals who in-

sisted, for the sake of opposition, on Tascheron's innocence, and had tried to upset the case, now began to grumble at the delay. Opposition, when systematic, is apt to fall into inconsistencies; for the point in question is not to be in the right, but to have a stone always ready to sling at authority. So towards the beginning of August, the hand of authority was forced by the clamor (after a chance sound echoed by empty heads) called public opinion. The execution was announced.

In this extremity the Abbé Dutheil took it upon himself to suggest a last resource to the Bishop. One result of the success of this plan will be the introduction of another actor in the judicial drama, the extraordinary personage who forms a connecting link between the different groups in it; the greatest of all the figures in this *Scène*; the guide who should hereafter bring Mme. Graslin on a stage where her virtues were to shine forth with the brightest luster; where she would exhibit a great and noble charity, and act the part of a Christian and a ministering angel.

The Bishop's palace at Limoges stands on the hillside above the Vienne. The gardens, laid out in terraces supported by solidly built walls, crowned by balustrades, descend stepwise, following the fall of the land to the river. The sloping ridge rises high enough to give the spectator on the opposite bank the impression that the Faubourg Saint-Étienne nestles at the foot of the lowest terrace of the Bishop's garden. Thence, as you walk in one direction, you look out across the river, and in the other along its course through the broad fertile landscape. When the Vienne has flowed westwards past the palace gardens, it takes a sudden turn towards Limoges, skirting the Faubourg Saint-Martial in a graceful curve. A little further, and beyond the suburb, it passes a charming country house called the Cluzeau. You can catch a glimpse of the walls from the nearest point of the nearest terrace, a trick of the perspective uniting them with the church towers of the suburb. Opposite the Cluzeau lies the island in the river, with its indented shores, its thick-growing poplars and forest trees, the island which Véronique in her girlhood called the Isle of France.

Eastwards, the low hills shut in the horizon like the walls of an amphitheater.

The charm of the situation and the rich simplicity of the architecture of the palace mark it out among the other buildings of a town not conspicuously happy in the choice or employment of its building materials. The view from the gardens, which attracts travelers in search of the picturesque, had long been familiar to the Abbé Dutheil. He had brought M. de Grancour with him this evening, and went down from terrace to terrace, taking no heed of the sunset shedding its crimson and orange and purple over the balustrades along the steps, the houses on the suburb, and the waters of the river. He was looking for the Bishop, who at that moment sat under the vines in a corner of the furthest terrace, taking his dessert, and enjoying the charms of the evening at his ease.

The long shadows cast by the poplars on the island fell like a bar across the river; the sunlight lit up their topmost crests, yellowed somewhat already, and turned the leaves to gold. The glow of the sunset, differently reflected from the different masses of green, composed a glorious harmony of subdued and softened color. A faint evening breeze stirring in the depths of the valley ruffled the surface of the Vienne into a broad sheet of golden ripples that brought out in contrast all the sober hues of the roofs in the Faubourg Saint-Étienne. The church towers and housetops of the Faubourg Saint-Martial were blended in the sunlight with the vine stems of the trellis. The faint hum of the country town, half hidden in the re-entering curve of the river, the softness of the air,—all sights and sounds combined to steep the prelate in the calm recommended for the digestion by the authors of every treatise on that topic. Unconsciously the Bishop fixed his eyes on the right bank of the river, on a spot where the lengthening shadows of the poplars in the island had reached the bank by the Faubourg Saint-Étienne, and darkened the walls of the garden close to the scene of the double murder of old Pingret and the servant; and just as his snug felicity of the moment was troubled by the difficulties which his vicars-general recalled to his recollec-

tion, the Bishop's expression grew inscrutable by reason of many thoughts. The two subordinates attributed his absence of mind to ennui; but, on the contrary, the Bishop had just discovered in the sands of the Vienne the key to the puzzle, the clew which the des Vanneaulx and the police were seeking in vain.

"My lord," began the Abbé de Grancour, as he came up to the Bishop, "everything has failed; we shall have the sorrow of seeing that unhappy Tascheron die in mortal sin. He will bellow the most awful blasphemies; he will heap insults on poor Abbé Pascal; he will spit on the crucifix, and deny everything, even hell-fire."

"He will frighten the people," said the Abbé Dutheil. "The very scandal and horror of it will cover our defeat and our inability to prevent it. So, as I was saying to M. de Grancour as we came, may this scene drive more than one sinner back to the bosom of the Church."

His words seemed to trouble the Bishop, who laid down the bunch of grapes which he was stripping on the table, wiped his fingers, and signed to his two vicars-general to be seated.

"The Abbé Pascal has managed badly," said he at last.

"He is quite ill after the last scene with the prisoner," said the Abbé de Grancour. "If he had been well enough to come, we should have brought him with us to explain the difficulties which put all the efforts which your lordship might command out of our power."

"The condemned man begins to sing obscene songs at the top of his voice when he sees one of us; the noise drowns every word as soon as you try to make yourself heard," said a young priest who was sitting beside the Bishop.

The young speaker leant his right elbow on the table, his white hand drooped carelessly over the bunches of grapes as he selected the reddest berries, with the air of being perfectly at home. He had a charming face, and seemed to be either a table companion or a favorite with the Bishop, and was in fact a favorite and the prelate's table companion. As the younger brother of the Baron de Rastignac he was connected with the Bishop of Limoges by the ties of family

relationship and affection. Considerations of fortune had induced the young man to enter the Church; and the Bishop, aware of this, had taken his young relative as his private secretary until such time as advancement might befall him; for the Abbé Gabriel bore a name which predestined him to the highest dignities of the Church.

"Then have you been to see him, my son?" asked the Bishop.

"Yes, my lord. As soon as I appeared, the miserable man poured out a torrent of the most disgusting language against you and me; his behavior made it impossible for a priest to stay with him. Will you permit me to offer you a piece of advice, my lord?"

"Let us hear the wisdom which God sometimes puts into the mouth of babes," said the Bishop.

"Did he not cause Balaam's ass to speak?" the young Abbé de Rastignac retorted quickly.

"According to some commentators, the ass was not very well aware of what she was saying," the Bishop answered, laughing.

Both the vicars-general smiled. In the first place, it was the Bishop's joke; and in the second, it glanced lightly on this young Abbé, of whom all the dignitaries and ambitious churchmen grouped about the Bishop were envious.

"My advice would be to beg M. de Granville to put off the execution for a few days yet. If the condemned man knew that he owed those days of grace to our intercession, he would perhaps make some show of listening to us, and if he listens——"

"He will persist in his conduct when he sees what comes of it," said the Bishop, interrupting his favorite.—"Gentlemen," he resumed after a moment's pause, "is the town acquainted with these details?"

"Where will you find the house where they are not discussed?" answered the Abbé de Grancour. "The condition of our good Abbé Pascal since his last interview is matter of common talk at this moment."

"When is Tascheron to be executed?" asked the Bishop.

"To-morrow. It is market day," replied M. de Grancour.

"Gentlemen, religion must not be vanquished," cried the Bishop. "The more attention is attracted to this affair, the more determined am I to secure a signal triumph. Miracles are called for here among an industrial population, where sedition has spread itself and taken root far and wide; where religious and monarchic doctrines are regarded with a critical spirit; where nothing is respected by a system of analysis derived from Protestantism by the so-called Liberalism of to-day, which is free to take another name to-morrow. Go to M. de Granville, gentlemen, he is with us heart and soul; tell him that we ask for a few days' respite. I will go to see the unhappy man."

"You, my lord!" cried the Abbé de Rastignac. "Will not too much be compromised if *you* fail? You should only go when success is assured."

"If my Lord Bishop will permit me to give my opinion," said the Abbé Dutheil, "I think that I can suggest a means of securing the triumph of religion under these melancholy circumstances."

The Bishop's response was a somewhat cool sign of assent, which showed how low his vicar-general's credit stood with him.

"If anyone has any ascendancy over this rebellious soul, and may bring it to God, it is M. Bonnet, the curé of the village where the man was born," the Abbé Dutheil went on.

"One of your protégés," remarked the Bishop.

"My lord, M. Bonnet is one of those who recommend themselves by their militant virtues and evangelical labors."

This answer, so modest and simple, was received with a silence which would have disconcerted anyone but the Abbé Dutheil. He had alluded to merits which had been overlooked, and the three who heard him chose to regard the words as one of the meek sarcasms, neatly put, impossible to resent, in which churchmen excel, accustomed as they are by their training to say the thing they mean without transgressing the severe rules laid down for them in the least particular. But it was nothing of the kind; the Abbé never thought of himself. Then—

"I have heard of Saint Aristides for too long," the Bishop

made answer, smiling. "If I were to leave his light under a bushel, it would be injustice or prejudice on my part. Your Liberals cry up your M. Bonnet as if he were one of themselves; I mean to see this rural apostle and judge for myself. Go to the public prosecutor, gentlemen, and ask him in my name for a respite; I will await his answer before dispatching our well-beloved Abbé Gabriel to Montégnac to fetch the holy man for us. We will put his beatitude in the way of working a miracle. . . ."

The Abbé Dutheil flushed red at these words from the prelate-noble, but he chose to disregard any slight that they might contain for him. Both vicars-general silently took their leave, and left the Bishop alone with his young friend.

"The secrets of the confessional which we require lie buried there, no doubt," said the Bishop, pointing to the shadows of the poplars where they reached a lonely house halfway between the island and the Faubourg Saint-Étienne.

"So I have always thought," Gabriel answered. "I am not a judge, and I do not care to play the spy; but if I had been the examining magistrate, I should know the name of the woman who is trembling now at every sound, at every word that is uttered, compelled all the while to wear a smooth, unclouded brow under pain of accompanying the condemned man to his death. Yet she has nothing to fear. I have seen the man—he will carry the secret of his passionate love to his grave."

"Crafty young man!" said the Bishop, pinching his secretary's ear, as he pointed out a spot between the island in the river and the Faubourg Saint-Étienne, lit up by a last red ray from the sunset. The young priest's eyes had been fixed on it as he spoke. "Justice ought to have searched there; is it not so?"

"I went to see the criminal to try the effect of my guess upon him; but he is watched by spies, and if I had spoken audibly, I might have compromised the woman for whom he is dying."

"Let us keep silence," said the Bishop. "We are not concerned with man's justice. One head will fall, and that

is enough. Besides, sooner or later, the secret will return to the Church."

The perspicacity of the priest, fostered by the habit of meditation, is far keener than the insight of the lawyer and the detective. After all the preliminary investigations, after the legal inquiry, and the trial at the Assizes, the Bishop and his secretary, looking down from the height of the terrace, had in truth, by dint of contemplation, succeeded in discovering details as yet unknown.

M. de Granville was playing his evening game of whist in Mme. Graslin's house, and his visitors were obliged to wait for his return. It was near midnight before his decision was known at the palace, and by two o'clock in the morning the Abbé Gabriel started out for Montégnaç in the Bishop's own traveling carriage, lent to him for the occasion. The place is about nine leagues distant from Limoges; it lies under the mountains of the Corrèze, in that part of Limousin which borders on the department of the Creuse. All Limoges, when the Abbé left it, was in a ferment of excitement over the execution promised for this day, an expectation destined to be balked once more.

### III

#### THE CURÉ OF MONTÉGNAC

IN priests and fanatics there is a certain tendency to insist upon the very utmost to which they are legally entitled where their interests are concerned. Is this a result of poverty? Is an egoism which favors the development of greed one of the consequences of isolation upon a man's character? Or are shrewd business habits, as well as parsimony, acquired by a course of management of charitable funds? Each temperament suggests a different explanation, but the fact remains the same whether it lurks (as not seldom happens) beneath urbane good humor, or (and equally often) is openly manifested; and the difficulty of putting the hand in the pocket is evidently increasingly felt on a journey.



Gabriel de Rastignac, the prettiest young gentleman who had bowed his head before the altar of the tabernacle for some time, only gave thirty sous to the postilions, and traveled slowly accordingly. The postilion tribe drive with all due respect a bishop who does but pay twice the amount demanded of ordinary mortals, but, at the same time, they are careful not to damage the episcopal equipage, for fear of getting themselves into trouble. The Abbé, traveling alone for the first time in his life, spoke mildly at each relay—

“Just drive on a little faster, can’t you?”

“You can’t get the whip to work without a little palm oil,” an old postilion replied, and the young Abbé, much mystified, fell back in a corner of the carriage. He amused himself by watching the landscape through which they were traveling, and walked up a hill now and again on the winding road from Bordeaux to Lyons.

Five leagues beyond Limoges the country changes. You have left behind the charming low hills about the Vienne and the fair meadow slopes of Limousin, which sometimes (and this particularly about Saint-Léonard) put you in mind of Switzerland. You find yourself in a wilder and sterner district. Wide moors, vast steppes without grass or herds of horses, stretch away to the mountains of the Corrèze on the horizon. The far-off hills do not tower above the plain, a grandly rent wall of rock like the Alps in the south; you look in vain for the desolate peaks and glowing gorges of the Apennine, or for the majesty of the Pyrenees—the curving wave-like swell of the hills of the Corrèze bears witness to their origin, to the peaceful slow subsidence of the waters which once overwhelmed this country.

These undulations, characteristic of this, and, indeed, of most of the hill districts of France, have perhaps contributed quite as much as the climate to gain for the land its title of “the kindly,” which Europe has confirmed. But it is a dreary transition country which separates Limousin from the provinces of Marche and Auvergne. In the mind of the poet and thinker who crosses it, it calls up visions of the Infinite (a terrible thought for certain souls); a woman

looking out on its monotonous sameness is driven to muse; and to those who must dwell with the wilderness, nature shows herself stubborn, peevish, and barren; 'tis a churlish soil that covers these wide gray plains.

Only the neighborhood of a great capital can work such a miracle as transformed Brie during the last two centuries. Here there is no large settlement which sometimes puts life into the waste lands which the agricultural economist regards as blanks in creation, spots where civilization groans aghast, and the tourist finds no inns and a total absence of that picturesque in which he delights.

But to lofty spirits the moors, the shadows needed in the vast picture of nature, are not repellent. In our own day, Fenimore Cooper, owner of so melancholy a talent, has set forth the mysterious charm of great solitudes magnificently in *The Prairie*. But the wastes shunned by every form of plant life, the barren soil covered with loose stones and water-borne pebbles, the "bad lands" of the earth—are so many challenges to civilization. France must face her difficulties and find a solution for them, as the British are doing; their patient heroism is turning the most barren heather land in Scotland into productive farms. Left to their primitive desolation, these fallows produce a crop of discouragement, of idleness, of poor physique from insufficient food, and crime, whenever want grows too clamorous. In these few words, you have the past history of Montégnaç.

What is there to be done when a waste on so vast a scale is neglected by the administration, deserted by the nobles, execrated by workers? Its inhabitants declare war against a social system which refuses to do its duty, and so it was in former times with the folk of Montégnaç. They lived, like Highlanders, by murder and rapine. At sight of that country a thoughtful observer could readily imagine how that only twenty years ago the people of the village were at war with society at large.

The wide plateau, cut away on one side by the Vienne, on another by the lovely valleys of Marche, bounded by Auvergne to the east, and shut in by the mountains of the Corrèze on the south, is very much like (agriculture apart)

the uplands of Beauce, which separate the basin of the Loire from the basin of the Seine or the plateaux of Touraine or of Berri, or many others of these facets, as it were, on the surface of France, so numerous that they demand the careful attention of the greatest administrators.

It is an unheard-of thing that while people complain that the masses are discontented with their condition, and constantly aspiring towards social elevation, a government cannot find a remedy for this in a country like France, where statistics show that there are millions of acres of land lying idle, and in some cases (as in Berri) covered with leaf mold seven or eight feet thick! A good deal of this land which should support whole villages, and yield a magnificent return to cultivation, is the property of pig-headed communes which refuse to sell to speculators because, forsooth, they wish to preserve the right of grazing some hundred cows upon it. Impotence is writ large over all these lands without a purpose. Yet every bit of land will grow some special thing, and neither arms nor will to work are lacking, but administrative ability and conscience.

Hitherto the upland districts of France have been sacrificed to the valleys. The Government has given its fostering protection to districts well able to take care of themselves. But most of these unlucky wastes have no water supply, the first requisite for cultivation. The mists which might fertilize the gray dead soil by depositing their oxides are swept across them by the wind. There are no trees to arrest the clouds and suck up their nourishing moisture. A few plantations here and there would be a godsend in such places. The poor folk who live in these wilds, at a practically impossible distance from the nearest large town, are without a market for their produce—if they have any. Scattered about on the edges of a forest left to nature, they pick up their firewood and eke out a precarious existence by poaching; in the winter starvation stares them in the face. They have not capital enough to grow wheat, for so poor are they that plows and cattle are beyond their means; and they live on chestnuts. If you have wandered through some natural history museum and felt the indescribable de-

pression which comes on after a prolonged study of the unvarying brown hues of the European specimens, you will perhaps understand how the perpetual contemplation of the gray plains must affect the moral conditions of the people who live face to face with such disheartening sterility. There is no shadow, nor contrast, nor coolness; no sight to stir associations which gladden the mind. One could hail a stunted crab-tree there as a friend.

The highroad forked at length, and a crossroad branched off towards the village a few leagues distant. Montégnaç, lying (as its name indicates) at the foot of a ridge of hills, is the chief village of a canton on the borders of Haute-Vienne. The hillside above belongs to the township which encircles hill country and plain; indeed, the commune is a miniature Scotland, and has its Highlands and its Lowlands. Only a league away, at the back of the hill which shelters the township, rises the first peak of the chain of the Corrèze, and all the country between is filled by the great Forest of Montégnaç, crowning the slope above the village, covering the little valleys and bleak undulating land (left bare in patches here and there), climbing the peak itself, stretching away to the north in a long narrow strip which ends abruptly in a point on a steep bank above the Aubusson road. That bit of steep bank rises above a deep hollow through which the highroad runs from Lyons to Bordeaux. Many a time coaches and foot passengers have been stopped in the darkest part of the dangerous ravine; and the robberies nearly always went without punishment. The situation favored the highwaymen, who escaped by paths well known to them into their forest fastnesses. In such a country the investigations of justice find little trace. People accordingly shunned that route.

Without traffic neither commerce nor industry can exist; the exchange of intellectual and material wealth becomes impossible. The visible wonders of civilization are in all cases the result of the application of ideas as old as man. A thought in the mind of man—that is from age to age the starting-point and the goal of all our civilization. The history of Montégnaç is a proof of this axiom of social

science. When the administration found itself in a position to consider the pressing practical needs of the country, the strip of forest was felled, gendarmes were posted to accompany the diligence through the two stages; but, to the shame of the gendarmerie be it said, it was not the sword but a voice, not Corporal Chervin but Parson Bonnet, who won the battle of civilization by reforming the lives of the people. The curé, seized with pity and compassion for those poor souls, tried to regenerate them, and persevered till he gained his end.

After another hour's journey across the plains where flints succeeded to dust, and dust to flints, and flocks of partridges abode in peace, rising at the approach of the carriage with a heavy whirring sound of their wings, the Abbé Gabriel, like most other travelers who pass that way, hailed the sight of the roofs of the township with a certain pleasure. As you enter Montégnac you are confronted by one of the queer post-houses, not to be found out of France. The sign-board, nailed up with four nails above a sorry empty stable, is a rough oaken plank on which a pretentious postilion has carved an inscription, darkening the letters with ink: *Pauste o chevos* it runs. The door is nearly always wide open. The threshold is a plank set up edgewise in the earth to keep the rain-water out of the stable, the floor being below the level of the road outside. Within, the traveler sees to his sorrow the harness, worn, mildewed, mended with string, ready to give way at the first tug. The horses are probably not to be seen; they are at work on the land, or out at grass, anywhere and everywhere but in the stable. If by any chance they are within, they are feeding. If the horses are ready, the postilion has gone to see his aunt or his cousin, or gone to sleep, or he is getting in his hay. Nobody knows where he is; you must wait while somebody goes to find him. He does not stir until he has a mind; and when he comes, it takes him an eternity to find his waistcoat or his whip, or to rub down his cattle. The buxom dame in the doorstep fidgets about even more restlessly than the traveler, and forestalls any outburst on his part by bestirring herself a good deal more quickly than the

horses. She personates the post-mistress whose husband is out in the fields.

It was in such a stable as this that the Bishop's favorite left his traveling carriage. The walls looked like maps; the thatched roof, as gay with flowers as a garden bed, bent under the weight of its growing house-leeks. He asked the woman of the place to have everything in readiness for his departure in an hour's time, and inquired his way to the parsonage of her. The good woman pointed out a narrow alley between two houses. That was the way to the church, she said, and he would find the parsonage hard by.

While the Abbé climbed the steep path paved with cobblestones between the hedgerows on either side, the post-mistress fell to questioning the post-boy. Every post-boy along the road from Limoges had passed on to his brother whip the surmises of the first postilion concerning the Bishop's intentions. So while Limoges was turning out of bed and talking of the execution of old Pingret's murderer, the country folk all along the road were spreading the news of the pardon procured by the Bishop for the innocent prisoner, and prattling of supposed miscarriages of justice, inasmuch, that when Jean-François came to the scaffold at a later day, he was like to be regarded as a martyr.

The Abbé Gabriel went some few paces along the foot-path, red with autumn leaves, dark with blackberries and sloes; then he turned and stood, acting on the instinct which prompts us to make a survey of any strange place, an instinct which we share with the horse and dog. The reason of the choice of the site of Montégnaç was apparent; several streams broke out of the hillside, and a small river flowed along by the departmental road which leads from the township to the prefecture. Like the rest of the villages in this plateau, Montégnaç is built of blocks of clay, dried in the sun; if a fire broke out in a cottage, it is possible that it might find it earth and leave it brick. The roofs are of thatch; altogether, it was a poor-looking place that the Bishop's messenger saw. Below Montégnaç lay fields of rye, potatoes, and turnips, land won from the plain. In the meadows on the lowest slope of the hillside, watered by arti-

ficial channels, were some of the celebrated breed of Limousin horses; a legacy (so it is said) of the Arab invaders of France, who crossed the Pyrenees to meet death from the battle-axes of Charles Martel's Franks, between Poitiers and Tours. Up above on the heights the soil looked parched. Now and again the reddish scorched surface, burnt bare by the sun, indicated the arid soil which the chestnuts love. The water, thriftily distributed along the irrigation channels, was only sufficient to keep the meadows fresh and green; on these hillsides grows the fine short grass, the delicate sweet pasture that builds you up a breed of horses delicate and impatient of control, fiery, but not possessed of much staying-power; unexcelled in their native district, but apt to change their character when they change their country.

Some young mulberry trees indicated an intention of growing silk. Like most villages, Montégnac could only boast a single street, to wit, the road that ran through it; but there was an Upper and Lower Montégnac on either side of it, each cut in two by a little pathway running at right angles to the road. The hillside below a row of houses on the ridge was gay with terraced gardens which rose from a level of several feet above the road, necessitating flights of steps, sometimes of earth, sometimes paved with cobblestones. A few old women, here and there, who sat spinning or looking after the children, put some human interest into the picture, and kept up a conversation between Upper and Lower Montégnac by talking to each other across the road, usually quiet enough. In this way news traveled pretty quickly from one end of the township to the other. The gardens were full of fruit trees, cabbages, onions, and pot herbs; beehives stood in rows along the terraces.

A second parallel row of cottages lay below the road, their gardens sloping down towards the little river which flowed through fields of thick-growing hemp, the fruit trees which love damp places marking its course. A few cottages, the post-house among them, nestled in a hollow, a situation well adapted for the weavers who lived in them, and almost every house was overshadowed by the walnut trees, which flourish best in heavy soil. At the further end of Montégnac,

and on the same side of the road, stood a house larger and more carefully kept than the rest: it was the largest of a group equally neat in appearance, a little hamlet in fact separated from the township by its gardens, and known then, as to-day, by the name of "Tascherons'." The commune was not much in itself, but some thirty outlying farms belonged to it. In the valley, several "water-lanes" like those in Berri and Marche marked out the course of the little streams with green fringes. The whole commune looked like a green ship in the midst of a wide sea.

Whenever a house, a farm, a village, or a district passes from a deplorable state to a more satisfactory condition of things, though as yet scarcely to be called strikingly prosperous, the life there seems so much a matter of course, so natural, that at first sight a spectator can never guess how much toil went to the founding of that not extraordinary prosperity; what an amount of effort, vast in proportion to the strength that undertook it; what heroic persistence lies there buried and out of sight, effort and persistence without which the visible changes could not have taken place. So the young Abbé saw nothing unusual in the pleasant view before his eyes; he little knew what that country had been before M. Bonnet came to it.

He turned and went a few paces further up the path, and soon came in sight of the church and parsonage, about six hundred feet above the gardens of Upper Montégnac. Both buildings, when first seen in the distance, were hard to distinguish among the ivy-covered stately ruins of the old Castle of Montégnac, a stronghold of the Navarreins in the twelfth century. The parsonage house had every appearance of being built in the first instance for a steward or head game-keeper. It stood at the end of a broad terrace planted with lime-trees, and overlooked the whole countryside. The ravages of time bore witness to the antiquity of the flights of steps and the walls which supported the terrace, the stones had been forced out of place by the constant imperceptible thrusting of plant life in the crevices, until tall grasses and wild flowers had taken root among them. Every step was covered with a dark-green carpet of fine close



moss. The masonry, solid though it was, was full of rifts and cracks, where wild plants of the pellitory and camomile tribe were growing; the maidenhair fern sprang from the loopholes in thick masses of shaded green. The whole face of the wall, in fact, was hung with the finest and fairest tapestry, damasked with bracken fronds, purple snapdragons with their golden stamens, blue borage, and brown fern and moss, till the stone itself was only seen by glimpses here and there through its moist, cool covering.

Up above, upon the terrace, the clipped box borders formed geometrical patterns in a pleasure garden framed by the parsonage house, and behind the parsonage rose the crags, a pale background of rock, on which a few drooping, feathery trees struggled to live. The ruins of the castle towered above the house and the church.

The parsonage itself, built of flints and mortar, boasted a single story and garrets above, apparently empty, to judge by the dilapidated windows in either gable under the high-pitched roof. A couple of rooms on the ground floor, separated by a passage with a wooden staircase at the further end of it, two more rooms on the second floor, and a little lean-to kitchen built against the side of the house in the yard, where a stable and coach-house stood perfectly empty, useless, abandoned—this was all. The kitchen garden lay between the house and the church; a ruinous covered passage led from the parsonage to the sacristy.

The young Abbé's eyes wandered over the place. He noted the four windows with their leaded panes, the brown moss-grown walls, the rough wooden door, so full of splits and cracks that it looked like a bundle of matches, and the adorable quaintness of it all by no means took his fancy. The grace of the plant life which covered the roofs, the wild climbing flowers that sprang from the rotting wooden sills and cracks in the wall, the trails and tendrils of the vines, covered with tiny clusters of grapes, which found their way in through the windows, as if they were fain to carry merriment and laughter into the house,—all this he beheld, and thanked his stars that his way led to a bishopric, and not to a country parsonage.

The house, open all day long, seemed to belong to everyone. The Abbé Gabriel walked into the dining-room, which opened into the kitchen. The furniture which met his eyes was poor—an old oak table with four twisted legs, an easy-chair covered with tapestry, a few wooden chairs, and an old chest, which did duty as a sideboard. There was no one in the kitchen except the cat, the sign of a woman in the house. The other room was the parlor; glancing round it, the young priest noticed that the easy-chairs were made of unpolished wood, and covered with tapestry. The paneling of the walls, like the rafters, was of chestnut wood, and black as ebony. There was a timepiece in a green case painted with flowers, a table covered with a worn green cloth, one or two chairs, and on the mantelshelf an Infant Jesus in wax under a glass shade set between two candlesticks. The hearth, surrounded by a rough wooden molding, was hidden by a paper screen representing the Good Shepherd with a sheep on His shoulder. In this way, doubtless, one of the family of the mayor, or of the justice of the peace, endeavored to express his acknowledgments of the care bestowed on his training.

The state of the house was something piteous. The walls, which had once been limewashed, were discolored here and there, and rubbed and darkened up to the height of a man's head. The wooden staircase, with its heavy balustrades, neatly kept though it was, looked as though it must totter if anyone set foot on it. At the end of the passage, just opposite the front door, another door stood open, giving the Abbé Gabriel an opportunity of surveying the kitchen garden, shut in by the wall of the old rampart, built of the white crumbling stone of the district. Fruit trees in full bearing had been trained espalier-fashion along this side of the garden, but the long trellises were falling to pieces, and the vine-leaves were covered with blight.

The Abbé went back through the house, and walked along the paths in the front garden. Down below the magnificent wide view of the valley was spread out before his eyes, a sort of oasis on the edge of the great plain, which, in the light morning mists, looked something like a waveless sea.

Behind, and rather to one side, the great forest stretched away to the horizon, the bronzed mass making a contrast with the plains, and on the other hand the church and the castle perched on the crag stood sharply out against the blue sky. As the Abbé Gabriel paced the tiny paths among the box-edged diamonds, circles, and stars, crunching the gravel beneath his boots, he looked from point to point at the scene; over the village, where already a few groups of gazers had formed to stare at him, at the valley in the morning light, the quick-set hedges that marked the ways, the little river flowing under its willows, in such contrast with the infinite of the plains. Gradually his impressions changed the current of his thoughts. He admired the quietness, he felt the influences of the pure air, of the peace inspired by a glimpse of a life of Biblical simplicity; and with these came a dim sense of the beauty of that life. He went back again to look at its details with a more serious curiosity.

A little girl, left in charge of the house no doubt, but busy pilfering in the garden, came back at the sound of a man's shoes creaking on the flagged pavement of the ground-floor rooms. In her confusion at being caught with fruit in her hand and between her teeth, she made no answer whatever to the questions put to her by this Abbé—young, handsome, daintily arrayed. The child had never believed it possible that such an Abbé could exist—radiant in fine lawn, neat as a new pin, and dressed in fine black cloth without a speck or a crease.

“M. Bonnet?” she echoed at last. “M. Bonnet is saying Mass, and Mlle. Ursule is gone to the church.”

The covered passage from the house to the sacristy had escaped the Abbé Gabriel's notice; so he went down the path again to enter the church by the principal door. The church porch was a sort of pent-house facing the village, set at the top of a flight of worn and disjointed steps, overlooking a square below; planted with the great elm trees which date from the time of the Protestant Sully, and full of channels washed by the rains.

The church itself, one of the poorest in France, where churches are sometimes very poor, was not unlike those huge

barns which boast a roof above the door, supported by brick pillars or tree trunks. Like the parsonage house, it was built of rubble, the square tower being roofed with round tiles; but Nature had covered the bare walls with the richest tracery moldings, and made them fairer still with color and light and shade, carving her lines and disposing her masses, showing all the craftsman's cunning of a Michel Angelo in her work. The ivy clambered over both sides, its sinewy stems clung to the walls till they were covered, beneath the green leaves, with as many veins as any anatomical diagram. Under this mantle, wrought by Time to hide the wounds which Time had made, damasked by autumn flowers that grew in the crevices, nestled the singing-birds. The rose window in the west front was bordered with blue harebells, like the first page of some richly painted missal. There were fewer flowers on the north side, which communicated with the parsonage, though even there there were patches of crimson moss on the gray stone, but the south wall and the apse were covered with many-colored blossoms; there were a few saplings rooted in the cracks, notably an almond tree, the symbol of Hope. Two giant firs grew up close to the wall of the apse, and served as lightning conductors. A low ruinous wall repaired and maintained at elbow height with fallen fragments of its own masonry ran round the churchyard. In the midst of the space stood an iron cross mounted on a stone pedestal, strewn with sprigs of box blessed at Easter, a reminder of a touching Christian rite, now fallen into disuse except in country places. Only in little villages and hamlets does the priest go at Eastertide to bear to his dead the tidings of the Resurrection—"You shall live again in happiness." Here and there above the grass-covered graves rose a rotten wooden cross.

The inside was in every way in keeping with the picturesque neglect outside of the poor church, where all the ornament had been given by Time, grown charitable for once. Within, your eyes turned at once to the roof. It was lined with chestnut wood and sustained at equal distances by strong king-posts set on cross beams; age had imparted to it the richest tones which old woods can take in Europe.

The four walls were limewashed and bare of ornament. Poverty had made unconscious Iconoclasts of these worshippers.

Four pointed windows in the side walls let in the light through their leaded panes; the floor was of brick; the seats, wooden benches. The tomb-shaped altar bore for ornament a great crucifix, beneath which stood a tabernacle in walnut wood (its moldings brightly polished and clean), eight candlesticks (the candles thriftily made of painted wood), and a couple of china vases full of artificial flowers, things that a broker's man would have declined to look at, but which must serve for God. The lamp in the shrine was simply a floating-light, like a night-light, set in an old silver-plated holy water stoup, hung from the ceiling by silken cords brought from the wreck of some château. The baptismal fonts were of wood like the pulpit, and a sort of cage where the churchwardens sat—the patricians of the place. The shrine in the Lady Chapel offered to the admiration of the public two colored lithographs framed in a narrow gilded frame. The altar had been painted white, and adorned with artificial flowers planted in gilded wooden flower pots set out on a white altar cloth edged with shabby yellowish lace.

But at the end of the church a long window covered with a red cotton curtain produced a magical effect. The limewashed walls caught a faint rose tint from that glowing crimson; it was as if some thought Divine shone from the altar to fill the poor place with warmth and light. On one wall of the passage which led into the sacristy the patron saint of the village had been carved in wood and painted—a St. John the Baptist and his sheep, an execrable daub. Yet in spite of the bareness and poverty of the church, there was about the whole a subdued harmony which appeals to those whose spirits have been finely touched, a harmony of visible and invisible emphasized by the coloring. The rich dark-brown tints of the wood made an admirable relief to the pure white of the walls, and both blended with the triumphant crimson of the chancel window, an austere trinity of color which recalled the great doctrine of the Catholic Church.

If surprise was the first feeling called forth by the sight of this miserable house of God, pity and admiration followed quickly upon it. Did it not express the poverty of those who worshipped there? Was it not in keeping with the quaint simplicity of the parsonage? And it was clean and carefully kept. You breathed, as it were, an atmosphere of the simple virtues of the fields; nothing within spoke of neglect. Primitive and homely though it was, it was clothed in prayer; a soul pervaded it which you felt, though you could not explain how.

The Abbé Gabriel slipped in softly, so as not to interrupt the meditations of two groups on the front benches before the high-altar, which was railed off from the nave by a balustrade of the inevitable chestnut wood, roughly made enough, and covered with a white cloth for the Communion. Just above the space hung the lamp. Some score of peasant folk on either side were so deeply absorbed in passionate prayer, that they paid no heed to the stranger as he walked up the church in the narrow gangway between the rows of benches. As the Abbé Gabriel stood beneath the lamp, he could see into the two chancels which completed the cross of the ground plan; one of them led to the sacristy, the other to the churchyard. It was in this latter, near the graves, that a whole family clad in black were kneeling on the brick floor, for there were no benches in this part of the church. The Abbé bent before the altar on the step of the balustrade and knelt to pray, giving a side glance at this sight, which was soon explained. The Gospel was read; the curé took off his chasuble and came down from the altar towards the railing; and the Abbé, who had foreseen this, slipped away and stood close to the wall before M. Bonnet could see him. The clock struck ten.

"My brethren," said the curé in a faltering voice, "even at this moment, a child of this parish is paying his forfeit to man's justice by submitting to its extreme penalty. We offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass for the repose of his soul. Let us all pray together to God to beseech Him not to forsake that child in his last moments, to entreat that repentance here on earth may find in heaven the mercy

which has been refused to it here below. The ruin of this unhappy child, on whom we had counted most surely to set a good example, can only be attributed to a lapse from religious principles——”

The curé was interrupted by the sound of sobbing from the group of mourners in the transept; and by the paroxysm of grief the young priest knew that this was the Tascheron family, though he had never seen them before. The two foremost among them were old people of seventy years at least. Their faces, swarthy as a Florentine bronze, were covered with deep impassive lines. Both of them, in their old patched garments, stood like statues close against the wall; evidently this was the condemned man's grandfather and grandmother. Their red glassy eyes seemed to shed tears of blood; the old arms trembled so violently that the sticks on which they leant made a faint sound of scratching on the bricks. Behind them the father and mother, their faces hidden in their handkerchiefs, burst into tears. About the four heads of the family knelt two married daughters with their husbands, then three sons, stupefied with grief. Five kneeling little ones, the oldest not more than seven years of age, understood nothing probably of all that went on, but looked and listened with the apparently torpid curiosity which in the peasant is often a process of observation carried (so far as the outward and visible is concerned) to the highest possible pitch. Last of all came the poor girl Denise, who had been imprisoned by justice, the martyr to sisterly love; she was listening with an expression which seemed to betoken incredulity and straying thoughts. To her it seemed impossible that her brother should die. Her face was a wonderful picture of another face, that of one among the three Maries who could not believe that Christ was dead, though she had shared the agony of His Passion. Pale and dry-eyed, as is the wont of those who have watched for many nights, her freshness had been withered more by sorrow than by work in the fields; but she still kept the beauty of a country girl, the full plump figure, the shapely red arms, a perfectly round face, and clear eyes, glittering at that moment with the light of despair in them. Her throat,

firm-fleshed and white below the line of sunburned brown, indicated the rich tissue and fairness of the skin beneath the stuff. The two married daughters were weeping; their husbands, patient tillers of the soil, were grave and sad. None of the three sons in their sorrow raised their eyes from the ground.

Only Denise and her mother showed any sign of rebellion in the harrowing picture of resignation and despairing anguish. The sympathy and sincere and pious commiseration felt by the rest of the villagers for a family so much respected had lent the same expression to all faces, an expression which became a look of positive horror when they gathered from the curé's words that even in that moment the knife would fall. All of them had known the young man from the day of his birth, and doubtless all of them believed him to be incapable of committing the crime laid to his charge. The sobbing which broke in upon the simple and brief address grew so vehement that the curé's voice suddenly ceased, and he invited those present to fervent prayer.

There was nothing in this scene to surprise a priest, but Gabriel de Rastignac was too young not to feel deeply moved by it. He had not as yet put priestly virtues in practice; he knew that a different destiny lay before him; that it would never be his duty to go forth into the social breaches where the heart bleeds at the sight of suffering on every side; his lot would be cast among the upper ranks of the clergy which keep alive the spirit of sacrifice, represent the highest intelligence of the Church, and, when occasion calls for it, display these same virtues of the village curé on the largest scale, like the great Bishops of Marseilles and Meaux, the Archbishops of Arles and Cambrai. The poor peasants were praying and weeping for one who (as they believed) was even then going to his death in a great public square, before a crowd of people assembled from all parts to see him die, the agony of death made intolerable for him by the weight of shame; there was something very touching in this feeble counterpoise of sympathy and prayer from a few, opposed to the cruel curiosity of the rabble and the



curses, not undeserved. The poor church heightened the pathos of the contrast.

The Abbé Gabriel was tempted to go over to the Tascherons and cry, "Your son, your brother has been reprieved!" but he shrank from interrupting the Mass; he knew, moreover, that it was only a reprieve, the execution was sure to take place sooner or later. But he could not follow the service; in spite of himself, he began to watch the pastor of whom the miracle of conversion was expected.

Out of the indications in the parsonage house, Gabriel de Rastignac had drawn a picture of M. Bonnet in his own mind: he would be short and stout, he thought, with a red powerful face, a rough workingman, almost like one of the peasants themselves, and tanned by the sun. The reality was very far from this; the Abbé Gabriel found himself in the presence of an equal. M. Bonnet was short, slender, and weakly-looking; yet it was none of these characteristics, but an impassioned face, such a face as we imagine for an apostle, which struck you at a first glance. In shape it was almost triangular; starting from the temples on either side of a broad forehead, furrowed with wrinkles, the meager outlines of the hollow cheeks met at a point in the chin. In that face, overcast by an ivory tint like the wax of an altar candle, blazed two blue eyes, full of the light of faith and the fires of a living hope. A long slender, straight nose divided it into two equal parts. The wide mouth spoke even when the full, resolute lips were closed, and the voice which issued thence was one of those which go to the heart. The chestnut hair, thin, smooth, and fine, denoted a poor physique, poorly nourished. The whole strength of the man lay in his will. Such were his personal characteristics. In any other such short hands might have indicated a bent towards material pleasures; perhaps he too, like Socrates, had found evil in his nature to subdue. His thinness was ungainly, his shoulders protruded too much, and he seemed to be knock-kneed; his bust was so overdeveloped in comparison with his limbs, that it gave him something of the appearance of a hunchback without the actual deformity; altogether, to an ordinary observer, his appearance was not

prepossessing. Only those who know the miracles of thought and faith and art can recognize and reverence the light that burns in a martyr's eyes, the pallor of steadfastness, the voice of love—all traits of the Curé Bonnet. Here was a man worthy of that early Church which no longer exists save in the pages of the *Martyrology*; and in pictures of the sixteenth century; he bore unmistakably the seal of human greatness which most nearly approaches the Divine; conviction had set its mark on him, and a conviction brings a salient indefinable beauty into faces made of the commonest human clay; the devout worshiper at any shrine reflects something of its golden glow, even as the glory of a noble love shines like a sort of light from a woman's face. Conviction is human will come to its full strength; and being at once the cause and the effect, conviction impresses the most indifferent, it is a kind of mute eloquence which gains a hold upon the masses.

As the curé came down from the altar, his eyes fell on the Abbé Gabriel, whom he recognized; but when the Bishop's secretary appeared in the sacristy, he found no one there but Ursule. Her master had already given his orders. Ursule, a woman of canonical age, asked the Abbé de Rastignac to follow her along the passage through the garden.

"M. le Curé told me to ask you whether you had breakfasted, sir," she said. "You must have started out from Limoges very early this morning to be here by ten o'clock, so I will set about getting breakfast ready. M. l'Abbé will not find the Bishop's table here, but we will do our best. M. Bonnet will not be long; he has gone to comfort those poor souls—the Tascherons. Something very terrible is happening to-day to one of their sons."

"But where do the poor people live?" the Abbé Gabriel put in at length. "I must take M. Bonnet back to Limoges with me at once by the Bishop's orders. The unhappy man is not to be executed to-day; his lordship has obtained a reprieve——"

"Ah!" cried Ursule, her tongue itching to spread the news. "There will be plenty of time to take that comfort to the poor things whilst I am getting breakfast ready."

The Tascherons live at the other end of the village. You follow the path under the terrace, that will take you to the house."

As soon as the Abbé Gabriel was fairly out of sight, Ursule went down to take the tidings to the village herself, and to obtain the things needed for breakfast.

The curé had learned, for the first time, at the church of a desperate resolve on the part of the Tascherons, made since the appeal had been rejected. They would leave the district; they had already sold all they had, and that very morning the money was to be paid down. Formalities and unforeseen delays had retarded the sale; they had been forced to stay in the countryside after Jean-François was condemned, and every day had been for them a cup of bitterness to drink. The news of the plan, carried out so secretly, had only transpired on the eve of the day fixed for the execution. The Tascherons had meant to leave the place before the fatal day; but the purchaser of their property was a stranger to the canton, a Corrèzien to whom their motives were indifferent, and he on his own part had found some difficulty in getting the money together. So the family had endured the utmost of their misery. So strong was the feeling of their disgrace in these simple folk who had never tampered with conscience, that grandfather and grandmother, daughters and sons-in-law, father and mother, and all who bore the name of Tascheron, or were connected with them, were leaving the place. Everyone in the commune was sorry that they should go, and the mayor had gone to the curé, entreating him to use his influence with the poor mourners.

As the law now stands, the father is no longer responsible for his son's crime, and the father's guilt does not attach to his children, a condition of things in keeping with other emancipations which have weakened the paternal power, and contributed to the triumph of that individualism which is eating the heart of society in our days. The thinker who looks to the future sees the extinction of the spirit of the family; those who drew up the new code have set in its place equality and independent opinion. The family will

always be the basis of society; and now the family, as it used to be, exists no longer, it has come of necessity to be a temporary arrangement, continually broken up and reunited only to be separated again; the links between the future and the past are destroyed, the family of an older time has ceased to exist in France. Those who proceeded to the demolition of the old social edifice were logical when they decided that each member of the family should inherit equally, lessening the authority of the father, making of each child the head of a new household, suppressing great responsibilities; but is the social system thus re-edified as solid a structure, with its laws of yesterday unproved by long experience, as the old monarchy was in spite of its abuses? With the solidarity of the family, society has lost that elemental force which Montesquieu discovered and called "honor." Society has isolated its members the better to govern them, and has divided in order to weaken. The social system reigns over so many units, an aggregation of so many ciphers, piled up like grains of wheat in a heap. Can the general welfare take the place of the welfare of the family? Time holds the answer to this great enigma. And yet—the old order still exists, it is so deeply rooted that you find it most alive among the people. It is still an active force in remote districts where "prejudice," as it is called, likewise exists; in old-world nooks where all the members of a family suffer for the crime of one, and the children for the sins of their fathers.

It was this belief which made their own countryside intolerable to the Tascherons. Their profoundly religious natures had brought them to the church that morning, for how was it possible to stay away when the Mass was said for their son, and prayer offered that God might bring him to a repentance which should reopen eternal life to him? and, moreover, must they not take leave of the village altar? But, for all that, their plans were made; and when the curé, who followed them, entered the principal house, he found the bundles made up, ready for the journey. The purchaser was waiting with the money. The notary had just made out the receipt. Out in the yard, in front of the house,

stood a country cart ready to take the old people and the money and Jean-François's mother. The rest of the family meant to set out on foot that night.

The young Abbé entered the room on the ground floor where the whole family were assembled, just as the curé of Montégnac had exhausted all his eloquence. The two old people seemed to have ceased to feel from excess of grief; they were crouching on their bundles in a corner of the room, gazing round them at the old house, which had been a family possession from father to son, at the familiar furniture, at the man who had bought it all, and then at each other, as who should say, "Who would have thought that we should ever have come to this?" For a long time past the old people had resigned their authority to their son, the prisoner's father; and now, like old kings after their abdication, they played the passive part of subjects and children. Tascheron stood upright listening to the curé, to whom he gave answers in a deep voice by monosyllables. He was a man of forty-eight or thereabouts, with a fine face, such as served Titian for his apostles. It was a trustworthy face, gravely honest and thoughtful; a severe profile, a nose at right angles with the brows, blue eyes, a noble forehead, regular features, dark crisped stubborn hair, growing in the symmetrical fashion which adds a charm to a visage bronzed by a life of work in the open air—this was the present head of the house. It was easy to see that the curé's arguments were shattered against that resolute will.

Denise was leaning against the bread hutch, watching the notary, who used it as a writing table; they had given him the grandmother's armchair. The man who had bought the place sat beside the scrivener. The two married sisters were laying the cloth for the last meal which the old folk would offer or partake of in the old house and in their own country before they set out to live beneath alien skies. The men of the family half stood, half sat, propped against the large bedstead with the green serge curtains, while Tascheron's wife, their mother, was whisking an omelette by the fire. The grandchildren crowded about the doorway, and the purchaser's family were outside.

Out of the window you could see the garden, carefully cultivated, stocked with fruit trees; the two old people had planted them—every one. Everything about them, like the old smoke-begrimed room with its black rafters, seemed to share in the pent-up sorrow, which could be read in so many different expressions on the different faces. The meal was being prepared for the notary, the purchaser, the children, and the men: neither the father, nor mother, nor Denise, nor her sisters, cared to satisfy their hunger, their hearts were too heavily oppressed. There was a lofty and heart-rending resignation in this last performance of the duties of country hospitality—the Tascherons, men of an ancient stock, ended as people usually begin, by doing the honors of their house.

The Bishop's secretary was impressed by the scene, so simple and natural, yet so solemn, which met his eyes as he came to summon the curé of Montégnac to do the Bishop's bidding.

"The good man's son is still alive," Gabriel said, addressing the curé

At the words, which everyone heard in the prevailing silence, the two old people sprang to their feet as if the Trumpet had sounded for the Last Judgment. The mother dropped her frying-pan into the fire. A cry of joy broke from Denise. All the others seemed to be turned to stone in their dull amazement.

"*Jean-François is pardoned!*" The cry came at that moment as from one voice from the whole village, who rushed up to the Tascherons' house. "It is his lordship the Bishop——"

"I was *sure* of his innocence!" exclaimed the mother.

"The purchase holds good all the same, doesn't it?" asked the buyer, and the notary answered him by a nod.

In a moment the Abbé Gabriel became the point of interest, all eyes were fixed on him; his face was so sad, that it was suspected that there was some mistake, but he could not bear to correct it, and went out with the curé. Outside the house he dismissed the crowd by telling those who came round about him that there was no pardon, it was only a

reprieve, and a dismayed silence at once succeeded to the clamor. Gabriel and the curé turned into the house again, and saw a look of anguish on all the faces—the sudden silence in the village had been understood.

“Jean-François has not received his pardon, my friends,” said the young Abbé, seeing that the blow had been struck, “but my Lord Bishop’s anxiety for his soul is so great that he has put off the execution that your son may not perish to all eternity at least.”

“Then is he living?” cried Denise.

The Abbé took the curé aside and told him of his parishioner’s impiety, of the consequent peril to religion, and what it was that the Bishop expected of the curé of Montégnaç.

“My Lord Bishop requires my death,” returned the curé. “Already I have refused to go to this unhappy boy when his afflicted family asked me. The meeting and the scene *there* afterwards would shatter me like a glass. Let every man do his work. The weakness of my system, or rather the over-sensitiveness of my nervous organization, makes it out of the question for me to fulfill these duties of our ministry. I am still a country parson that I may serve my like, in a sphere where nothing more is demanded of me in a Christian life than I can accomplish. I thought very carefully over this matter, and tried to satisfy these good Tascherons, and to do my duty towards this poor boy of theirs; but at the bare thought of mounting the cart with him, the mere idea of being present while the preparations for death were being made, a deadly chill runs through my veins. No one would ask it of a mother; and remember, sir, that he is a child of my poor church——”

“Then you refuse to obey the Bishop’s summons?” asked the Abbé Gabriel.

M. Bonnet looked at him.

“His lordship does not know the state of my health,” he said, “nor does he know that my nature rises in revolt against——”

“There are times when, like Belzunce at Marseilles, we are bound to face a certain death,” the Abbé Gabriel broke in.

Just at that moment the curé felt that a hand pulled his cassock; he heard sobs, and, turning, saw the whole family on their knees. Old and young, parents and children, men and women, held out their hands to him imploringly; all the voices united in one cry as he showed his flushed face.

"Ah! save his soul at least!"

It was the old grandmother who had caught at the skirt of his cassock, and was bathing it with tears.

"I will obey, sir——" No sooner were the words uttered than the curé was forced to sit down; his knees trembled under him. The young secretary explained the nature of Jean-François's frenzy.

"Do you think that the sight of his younger sister might shake him?" he added, as he came to an end.

"Yes, certainly," returned the curé.—"Denise, you will go with us."

"So shall I," said the mother.

"No!" shouted the father. "That boy is dead to us. You know that. Not one of us shall see him."

"Do not stand in the way of his salvation," said the young Abbé. "If you refuse us the means of softening him, you take the responsibility of his soul upon yourself. In his present state his death may reflect more discredit on his family than his life."

"She shall go," said the father. "She always interfered when I tried to correct my son, and this shall be her punishment."

The Abbé Gabriel and M. Bonnet went back together to the parsonage. It was arranged that Denise and her mother should be there at the time when the two ecclesiastics should set out for Limoges. As they followed the footpath along the outskirts of Upper Montégnac, the younger man had an opportunity of looking more closely than heretofore in the church at this country parson, so highly praised by the vicar-general. He was favorably impressed almost at once by his companion's simple dignified manners, by the magic of his voice, and by the words he spoke, in keeping with the voice. The curé had been but once to the palace since the Bishop had taken Gabriel de Rastignac as his secretary,



so that he had scarcely seen the favorite destined to be a Bishop some day; he knew that the secretary had great influence, and yet in the dignified kindness of his manner there was a certain independence, as of the curé whom the Church permits to be in some sort a sovereign in his own parish.

As for the young Abbé, his feelings were so far from appearing in his face that they seemed to have hardened it into severity; his expression was not chilly, it was glacial.

A man who could change the disposition and manners of a whole countryside necessarily possessed some faculty of observation, and was more or less of a physiognomist; and even had the curé been wise only in well-doing, he had just given proof of an unusually keen sensibility. The coolness with which the Bishop's secretary met his advances and responded to his friendliness struck him at once. He could only account for this reception by some secret dissatisfaction on the other's part, and looked back over his conduct, wondering how he could have given offense, and in what the offense lay. There was a short embarrassing silence, broken by the Abbé de Rastignac.

"You have a very poor church, M. le Curé," he remarked, aristocratic insolence in his tones and words.

"It is too small," answered M. Bonnet. "For great Church festivals the old people sit on benches round the porch, and the younger ones stand in a circle in the square down below; but they are so silent, that those outside can hear."

Gabriel was silent for several moments.

"If the people are so devout, why do you leave the church so bare?" he asked at length.

"Alas! sir, I cannot bring myself to spend money on the building when the poor need it. The poor are the Church. Besides, I should not fear a visitation from my Lord Bishop at the Fête-Dieu! Then the poor give the church such things as they have! Did you notice the nails along the walls? They fix a sort of wire trellis-work to them, which the women cover with bunches of flowers; the whole church is dressed in flowers, as it were, which keep fresh till the evening. My poor church, which looked so bare

to you, is adorned like a bride, and fragrant with sweet scents; the ground is strewn with leaves, and a path in the midst for the passage of the Holy Sacrament is carpeted with rose petals. For that one day I need not fear comparison with Saint Peter's at Rome. The Holy Father has his gold, and I my flowers; to each his miracle. Ah! the township of Montégriac is poor, but it is Catholic. Once upon a time they used to rob travelers, now anyone who passes through the place might drop a bag full of money here, and he would find it when he returned home."

"Such a result speaks strongly in your praise," said Gabriel.

"I have had nothing to do with it," answered the curé, flushing at this incisive epigram. "It has been brought about by the Word of God and the sacramental bread."

"Bread somewhat brown," said the Abbé Gabriel, smiling.

"White bread is only suited to the rich," said the curé humbly.

The Abbé took both M. Bonnet's hands in his, and grasped them cordially.

"Pardon me, M. le Curé," he said; and in a moment the reconciliation was completed by a look in the beautiful blue eyes that went to the depths of the curé's soul.

"My Lord Bishop recommended me to put your patience and humility to the proof, but I can go no further. After this little while I see how greatly you have been wronged by the praises of the Liberal party."

Breakfast was ready. Ursule had spread the white cloth, and set new-laid eggs, butter, honey and fruit, cream and coffee, among bunches of flowers on the old-fashioned table in the old-fashioned sitting-room. The window that looked out upon the terrace stood open, framed about with green leaves. Clematis grew about the ledge—white starry blossoms, with tiny sheaves of golden crinkled stamens at their hearts to relieve the white. Jessamine climbed up one side of the window, and nasturtiums on the other; above it, a trail of vine, turning red even now, made a rich setting, which no sculptor could hope to render, so full of grace was that lace-work of leaves outlined against the sky.

"You will find life here reduced to its simplest terms," said the curé, smiling, though his face did not belie the sadness of his heart. "If we had known that you were coming—and who could have foreseen the events which have brought you here?—Ursule would have had some trout for you from the torrent; there is a trout stream in the forest, and the fish are excellent; but I am forgetting that this is August, and that the Gabou will be dry! My head is very much confused——"

"Are you very fond of this place?" asked the Abbé.

"Yes. If God permits, I shall die curé of Montégnaç. I could wish that other and distinguished men, who have thought to do better by becoming lay philanthropists, had taken this way of mine. Modern philanthropy is the bane of society; the principles of the Catholic religion are the one remedy for the evils which leaven the body social. Instead of describing the disease and making it worse by jeremiads, each one should have put his hand to the plow and entered God's vineyard as a simple laborer. My task is far from being ended here, sir; it is not enough to have raised the moral standard of the people, who lived in a frightful state of irreligion when I first came here; I would fain die among a generation fully convinced."

"You have only done your duty," the younger man retorted dryly; he felt a pang of jealousy in his heart.

The other gave him a keen glance.

"Is this yet another test?" he seemed to say—but aloud he answered humbly, "Yes.—I wish every hour of my life," he added, "that everyone in the kingdom would do his duty."

The deep underlying significance of those words was still further increased by the tone in which they were spoken. It was clear that here, in this year 1829, was a priest of great intellectual power, great likewise in the simplicity of his life; who, though he did not set up his own judgment against that of his superiors, saw none the less clearly whither the Church and the Monarchy were going.

When the mother and daughter had come, the Abbé left the parsonage and went down to see if the horses had been

put in. He was very impatient to return to Limoges. A few minutes later he returned to say that all was in readiness for their departure, and the four set out on their journey. Every creature in Montégnac stood in the road about the post-house to see them go. The condemned man's mother and sister said not a word; and as for the two ecclesiastics, there were so many topics to be avoided that conversation was difficult, and they could neither appear indifferent nor try to take a cheerful tone. Still endeavoring to discover some neutral ground for their talk as they traveled on, the influences of the great plain seemed to prolong the melancholy silence.

"What made you accept the position of an ecclesiastic?" Gabriel asked at last out of idle curiosity, as the carriage turned into the highroad.

"I have never regarded my office as a 'position,'" the curé answered simply. "I cannot understand how anyone can take holy orders for any save the one indefinable and all-powerful reason—a vocation. I know that not a few have become laborers in the great vineyard with hearts worn out in the service of the passions; men who have loved without hope, or whose hopes have been disappointed; men whose lives were blighted when they laid the wife or the woman they loved in the grave; men grown weary of life in a world where in these times nothing, not even sentiments, are stable and secure, where doubt makes sport of the sweetest certainties, and belief is called superstition.

"Some leave political life in times when to be in power seems to be a sort of expiation, when those who are governed look on obedience as an unfortunate necessity; and very many leave a battlefield without standards where powers, by nature opposed, combine to defeat and dethrone the right. I am not supposing that any man can give himself to God for what he may gain. There are some who appear to see in the clergy a means of regenerating our country; but, according to my dim lights, the patriot priest is a contradiction in terms. The priest should belong to God alone.

"I had no wish to offer to our Father, who yet accepts all things, a broken heart and an enfeebled will; I gave

myself to Him whole and entire. It was a touching fancy in the old pagan religion which brought the victim crowned with flowers to the temple of the gods for sacrifice. There is something in that custom that has always appealed to me. A sacrifice is nothing unless it is made graciously.—So the story of my life is very simple, there is not the least touch of romance in it. Still, if you would like to hear a full confession, I will tell you all about myself.

“My family are well-to-do and almost wealthy. My father, a self-made man, is hard and inflexible; he deals the same measure to himself as to his wife and children. I have never seen the faintest smile on his lips. With a hand of iron, a brow of bronze, and an energetic nature at once sullen and morose, he crushed us all—wife and children, clerks and servants, beneath a savage tyranny. I think (I speak for myself alone) that I could have borne the life if the pressure brought to bear on us had been even; but he was crotchety and changeable, and this fitfulness made it unbearable. We never knew whether we had done right or wrong, and the horrible suspense in which we lived at home becomes intolerable in domestic life. It is pleasanter to be out in the streets than in the house. Even as it was, if I had been alone at home, I could have borne all this without a murmur; but there was my mother, whom I loved passionately; the sight of her misery and the continual bitterness of her life broke my heart; and if, as sometimes happened, I surprised her in tears, I was beside myself with rage. I was sent to school; and those years, usually a time of hardship and drudgery, were a sort of golden age for me. I dreaded the holidays. My mother herself was glad to come to see me at the school.

“When I had finished my humanities, I went home and entered my father’s office, but I could only stay there a few months; youth was strong in me, my mind might have given way.

“One dreary autumn evening my mother and I took a walk by ourselves along the Boulevard Bourdon, then one of the most depressing spots in Paris, and there I opened my heart to her. I said that I saw no possible life for

me save in the Church. So long as my father lived I was bound to be thwarted in my tastes, my ideas, even in my affections. If I adopted the priest's cassock, he would be compelled to respect me, and in this way I might become a tower of strength to the family should occasion call for it. My mother cried bitterly. At that very time my older brother had enlisted as a common soldier, driven out of the house by the causes which had decided my vocation. (He became a general afterwards, and fell in the battle of Leipzig.) I pointed out to my mother as a way of salvation for her that she should marry my sister (as soon as she should be old enough to settle in life) to a man with plenty of character, and look to this new family for support.

"So in 1807, under the pretext of escaping the conscription without expense to my father, and at the same time declaring my vocation, I entered the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice at the age of nineteen. Within those famous old walls I found happiness and peace, troubled only by thoughts of what my mother and sister must be enduring. Things had doubtless grown worse and worse at home, for when they came to see me they upheld me in my determination. Initiated, it may be, by my own pain into the secrets of charity, as the great Apostle has defined it in his sublime epistle, I longed to bind the wounds of the poor and suffering in some out-of-the-way spot; and thereafter to prove, if God deigned to bless my efforts, that the Catholic religion, as put in practice by man, is the one true, good, and noble civilizing agent on earth.

"During those last days of my diaconate, grace doubtless enlightened me. Fully and freely I forgave my father, for I saw that through him I had found my real vocation. But my mother—in spite of a long and tender letter, in which I explained this, and showed how the trace of the finger of God was visible throughout—my mother shed many tears when she saw my hair fall under the scissors of the Church; for she knew how many joys I was renouncing, and did not know the hidden glories to which I aspired. Women are so tender-hearted. When at last I was God's, I felt an infinite peace. All the cravings, the vanities, and cares that

vex so many souls fell away from me. I thought that Heaven would have care for me as for a vessel of its own. I went forth into a world from which all fear was driven out, where the future was sure, where everything is the work of God—even the silence. This quietness of soul is one of the gifts of grace. My mother could not imagine what it was to take a church for a bride; nevertheless, when she saw that I looked serene and happy, she was happy. After my ordination I came to pay a visit to some of my father's relatives in Limousin, and one of these by accident spoke of the state of things in the Montégnaç district. With a sudden illumination like lightning, the thought flashed through my inmost soul—'Behold thy vine!' And I came here. So, as you see, sir, my story is quite simple and uninteresting."

As he spoke, Limoges appeared in the rays of the sunset, and at the sight the two women could not keep back their tears.

Meanwhile the young man whom love in its separate guises had come to find, the object of so much outspoken curiosity, hypocritical sympathy, and very keen anxiety, was lying on his prison mattress in the condemned cell. A spy at the door was on the watch for any words that might escape him waking or sleeping, or in one of his wild fits of fury; so bent was justice upon coming at the truth, and on discovering Jean-François's accomplice as well as the stolen money, by every means that the wit of man could devise.

The des Vanneaulx had the police in their interest; the police spies watched through the absolute silence. Whenever the man told off for this duty looked through the hole made for the purpose, he always saw the prisoner in the same attitude, bound in his strait waistcoat, his head tied up by a leather strap to prevent him from tearing the stuff and the thongs with his teeth. Jean-François lay staring at the ceiling with a fixed desperate gaze, his eyes glowed, and seemed as if they were reddened by the full-pulsed tide of life sent surging through him by terrible thoughts. It was as if an antique statue of Prometheus had become a living man, with the thought of some lost joy gnawing his

heart; so when the second *avocat général* came to see him, the visitor could not help showing his surprise at a character so dogged. At sight of any human being admitted into his cell, Jean-François flew into a rage which exceeded everything in the doctor's experience of such affections. As soon as he heard the key turn in the lock, or the bolts drawn in the heavily ironed door, a light froth came to his lips.

In person, Jean-François Tascneron, twenty-five years of age, was short but well made. His hair was stiff and crisp, and grew rather low on his forehead, signs of great energy. The clear, brilliant, yellow eyes, set rather too close together, gave him something the look of a bird of prey. His face was of the round dark-skinned type common in Central France. One of his characteristics confirmed Lavater's assertion that the front teeth overlap in those predestined to be murderers; but the general expression of his face spoke of honesty, of simple warm-heartedness of disposition—it would have been nothing extraordinary if a woman had loved such a man passionately. The lines of the fresh mouth, with its dazzling white teeth, were gracious; there was that peculiar shade in the scarlet of the lips which indicates ferocity held in check, and frequently a temperament which thirsts for pleasure and demands free scope for indulgence. There was nothing of the workman's coarseness about him. To the women who watched his trial it seemed evident that it was a woman who had brought flexibility and softness into the fiber inured to toil, the look of distinction into the face of a son of the fields, and grace into his bearing. Women recognize the traces of love in a man, and men are quick to see in a woman whether (to use a colloquial phrase) Love has passed that way.

That evening Jean-François heard the sound as the bolts were withdrawn and the key was thrust into the lock; he turned his head quickly with the terrible smothered growl with which his fits of fury began; but he trembled violently when through the soft dusk he made out the forms of his mother and sister, and behind the two dear faces another—the curé of Montégnaç.



"So this is what those barbarous wretches held in store for me!" he said, and closed his eyes.

Denise, with her prison experience, was suspicious of every least thing in the room; the spy had hidden himself, meaning, no doubt, to return; she fled to her brother, laid her tear-stained face against his, and said in his ear, "Can they hear what we say?"

"I should rather think they can, or they would not have sent you here," he answered aloud. "I have asked as a favor this long while that I might not see any of my family."

"What a way they have treated him!" cried the mother, turning to the curé. "My poor boy! my poor boy! . . ." She sank down on the foot of the mattress, and hid her face in the priest's cassock. The curé stood upright beside her. "I cannot bear to see him bound and tied up like that and put into that sack. . . ."

"If Jean will promise me to be good, to make no attempt on his life, and to behave well while we are with him, I will ask for leave to unbind him; but I shall suffer for the slightest infraction of his promise."

"I have such a craving to stretch myself out and move freely, dear M. Bonnet," said the condemned man, his eyes filling with tears, "that I give you my word I will do as you wish."

The curé went out, the jailer came, and the strait waistcoat was taken off.

"You are not going to kill me this evening, are you?" asked the turnkey.

Jean made no answer.

"Poor brother!" said Denise, bringing out a basket, which had been strictly searched, "there are one or two things here that you are fond of; here, of course, they grudge you every morsel you eat."

She brought out fruit gathered as soon as she knew that she might see her brother in prison, and a cake which her mother had put aside at once. This thoughtfulness of theirs, which recalled old memories, his sister's voice and movements, the presence of his mother and the curé,—all

combined to bring about a reaction in Jean. He burst into tears.

"Ah! Denise," he said, "I have not made a meal these six months past; I have eaten because hunger drove me to eat, that is all."

Mother and daughter went out and returned, and came and went. The housewifely instinct of seeing to a man's comfort put heart into them, and at last they set supper before their poor darling. The people of the prison helped them in this, having received orders to do all in their power compatible with the safe custody of the condemned man. The des Vanneaulx, with unkindly kindness, had done their part towards securing the comfort of the man in whose power their heritage lay. So Jean by these means was to know a last gleam of family happiness—happiness overshadowed by the somber gloom of the prison and death.

"Was my appeal rejected?" he asked M. Bonnet.

"Yes, my boy. There is nothing left to you now but to make an end worthy of a Christian. This life of ours is as nothing compared with the life which awaits us; you must think of your happiness in eternity. Your account with men is settled by the forfeit of your life, but God requires more, a life is too small a thing for Him."

"Forfeit my life? . . . Ah, you do not know all that I must leave behind."

Denise looked at her brother, as if to remind him that prudence was called for even in matters of religion.

"Let us say nothing of that," he went on, eating fruit with an eagerness that denoted a fierce and restless fire within. "When must I——?"

"No! no! nothing of that before me!" cried the mother.

"I should be easier if I knew," he said in a low voice, turning to the curé.

"The same as ever!" exclaimed M. Bonnet, and he bent to say in Jean's ear—"If you make your peace with God to-night, and your repentance permits me to give you absolution, it shall be to-morrow."—Aloud he added, "We have already gained something by calming you."

At these last words, Jean grew white to the lips, his eyes

contracted with a heavy scowl, his features quivered with the coming storm of rage.

"What, am I calm?" he asked himself. Luckily his eyes met the tearful eyes of his sister Denise, and he regained the mastery over himself.

"Ah, well," he said, looking at the curé, "I could not listen to anyone but you. They knew well how to tame me," and he suddenly dropped his head on his mother's shoulder.

"Listen, dear," his mother said, weeping, "our dear M. Bonnet is risking his own life by undertaking to be with you on the way to"—she hesitated, and then finished—"to eternal life."

And she lowered Jean's head and held it for a few moments on her heart.

"Will he go with me?" asked Jean, looking at the curé, who took it upon himself to bow his head.—"Very well, I will listen to him. I will do everything that he requires of me."

"Promise me that you will," said Denise, "for your soul must be saved; that is what we are all thinking of. And then—would you have it said in Limoges and all the country round that a Tascheron could not die like a man? After all, just think that all that you lose here you may find again in heaven, where forgiven souls will meet again."

This preternatural effort parched the heroic girl's throat. Like her mother, she was silent, but she had won the victory. The criminal, hitherto frantic that justice had snatched away his cup of bliss, was thrilled with the sublime doctrine of the Catholic Church, expressed so artlessly by his sister. Every woman, even a peasant girl like Denise Tascheron, possesses at need this tender tact; does not every woman love to think that love is eternal? Denise had touched two responsive chords. Awakened pride roused other qualities numbed by such utter misery and stunned by despair. Jean took his sister's hand in his and kissed it, and held her to his heart in a manner profoundly significant; tenderly, but in a mighty grasp.

"There," he said, "everything must be given up! That was my last heart-throb, my last thought—intrusted to you,

Denise.” And he gave her such a look as a man gives at some solemn moment, when he strives to impress his whole soul on another soul.

A whole last testament lay in the words and the thoughts; the mother and sister, the curé and Jean, understood so well that these were mute bequests to be faithfully executed and loyally demanded, that they turned away their faces to hide their tears and the thoughts that might be read in their eyes. Those few words, spoken in the death agony of passion, were the farewell to fatherhood and all that was sweetest on earth—the earnest of a Catholic renunciation of the things of earth. The curé, awed by the majesty of human nature, by all its greatness even in sin, measured the force of this mysterious passion by the enormity of the crime, and raised his eyes as if to entreat God’s mercy. In that action the touching consolation, the infinite tenderness of the Catholic faith was revealed—a religion that shows itself so human, so loving, by the hand stretched down to teach mankind the laws of a higher world, so awful, so divine, by the hand held out to guide him to heaven. It was Denise who had just discovered to the curé, in this mysterious manner, the spot where the rock would yield the streams of repentance. Suddenly Jean uttered a blood-curdling cry, like some hyena caught by the hunters. Memories had awakened.

“No! no! no!” he cried, falling upon his knees. “I want to live! Mother, take my place. Change clothes with me. I could escape! Have pity! Have pity! Go to the King and tell him. . . .”

He stopped short, a horrible sound like the growl of a wild beast broke from him; he clutched fiercely at the curé’s cassock.

“Go,” M. Bonnet said in a low voice, turning to the two women, who were quite overcome by this scene. Jean heard the word, and lifted his head. He looked up at his mother and sister, and kissed their feet.

“Let us say good-by,” he said. “Do not come back any more. Leave me alone with M. Bonnet; and do not be anxious about me now,” he added, as he clasped his mother

and sister in a tight embrace, in which he seemed as though he would fain put all the life that was in him.

"How can anyone go through all this and live?" asked Denise as they reached the wicket.

It was about eight o'clock in the evening when they separated. The Abbé de Rastignac was waiting at the gate of the prison, and asked the two women for news.

"He will make his peace with God," said Denise. "If he has not repented already, repentance is near at hand."

A few minutes later the Bishop learned that the Church would triumph in this matter, and that the condemned man would go to his execution with the most edifying religious sentiments. The public prosecutor was with his lordship, who expressed a wish to see the curé. It was midnight before M. Bonnet came. The Abbé Gabriel, who had been going to and fro between the palace and the prison, considered that the Bishop's carriage ought to be sent for him, for the poor man was so exhausted that he could scarcely stand. The thought of to-morrow's horrible journey, the anguish of soul which he had witnessed, the full and entire repentance of this member of his flock, who broke down completely at last when the great forecast of Eternity was put before him,—all these things had combined to wear out M. Bonnet's strength, for with his nervous temperament and electric swiftness of apprehension, he was quick to feel the sorrows of others as if they were his own.

Souls like this beautiful soul are so open to receive the impressions, the sorrows, passions, and sufferings of those towards whom they are drawn, that they feel the pain as if it were in very truth their own, and this in a manner which is torture; for their clearer eyes can measure the whole extent of the misfortune in a way impossible to those blinded by the egoism of love or paroxysms of grief. In this respect such a confessor as M. Bonnet is an artist who feels, instead of an artist who judges.

In the drawing-room at the palace, where the two vicars-general, the public prosecutor, and M. de Granville, and the Abbé de Rastignac were waiting, it dawned upon M. Bonnet that he was expected to bring news.

"M. le Curé," the Bishop began, "have you obtained any confessions with which you may in confidence enlighten justice without failing in your duty?"

"Before I gave absolution to that poor lost child, my lord, I was not content that his repentance should be as full and entire as the Church could require; I still further insisted on the restitution of the money."

"I came here to the palace about that restitution," said the public prosecutor. "Some light will be thrown on obscure points in the case by the way in which it is made. He certainly has accomplices——"

"With the interests of man's justice I have no concern," the curé said. "I do not know how or where the restitution will be made, but made it will be. When my Lord Bishop summoned me here to one of my own parishioners, he replaced me in the exact conditions which give a curé in his own parish the rights which a bishop exercises in his diocese—ecclesiastical obedience and discipline apart."

"Quite right," said the Bishop. "But the point is to obtain a voluntary confession before justice from the condemned man."

"My mission was simply to bring a soul to God," returned M. Bonnet.

M. de Grancour shrugged his shoulders slightly, and the Abbé Dutheil nodded approval.

"Tascheron, no doubt, wants to screen someone whom a restitution would identify," said the public prosecutor.

"Monsieur," retorted the curé, "I know absolutely nothing which might either confirm or contradict your conjecture; and, moreover, the secrets of the confessional are inviolable."

"So the restitution will be made?" asked the man of law.

"Yes, monsieur," answered the man of God.

"That is enough for me," said the public prosecutor. He relied upon the cleverness of the police to find and follow up any clew, as if passion and personal interest were not keener witted than any detective.

Two days later, on a market day, Jean-François Tascheron went to his death in a manner which left all pious and politic souls nothing to desire. His humility and piety were exemplary; he kissed with fervor the crucifix which M. Bonnet held out to him with trembling hands. The unfortunate man was closely scanned; all eyes were on the watch to see the direction his glances might take; would he look up at one of the houses, or gaze on some face in the crowd? His discretion was complete and inviolable. He met his death like a Christian, penitent and forgiven.

The poor curé of Montégnac was taken away unconscious from the foot of the scaffold, though he had not so much as set eyes on the fatal machine.

The next day at nightfall, three leagues away from Limoges, out on the highroad, and in a lonely spot, Denise Tascheron suddenly stopped. Exhausted though she was with physical weariness and sorrow, she begged her father to allow her to go back to Limoges with Louis-Marie Tascheron, one of her brothers.

"What more do you want to do in that place?" her father asked sharply, raising his eyebrows, and frowning.

"We have not only to pay the lawyer, father," she said in his ear; "there is something else. The money that he hid must be given back."

"That is only right," said the rigorously honest man, fumbling in a leather purse which he carried about him.

"No," Denise said swiftly, "he is your son no longer; and those who blessed, not those who cursed him, ought to pay the lawyer's fees."

"We will wait for you at Havre," her father said.

Denise and her brother crept into the town again before it was day. Though the police learned later on that two of the Tascherons had come back, they never could discover their lodging. It was near four o'clock when Denise and her brother went to the higher end of the town, stealing along close to the walls. The poor girl dared not look up, lest the eyes which should meet hers had seen her brother's head fall. First of all, she had sought out M. Bonnet, and

he, unwell though he was, had consented to act as Denise's father and guardian for the time being. With him they went to the barrister, who lived in the Rue de la Comédie.

"Good-day, poor children," the lawyer began, with a bow to M. Bonnet. "How can I be of use to you? Perhaps you want me to make application for your brother's body."

"No, sir," said Denise, her tears flowing at the thought, which had not occurred to her; "I have come to pay our debt to you, in so far as money can repay an eternal debt."

"Sit down a moment," said the lawyer, seeing that Denise and the curé were both standing. Denise turned away to draw from her stays two notes of five hundred francs, pinned to her shift. Then she sat down and handed over the bills to her brother's counsel. The curé looked at the lawyer with a light in his eyes, which soon filled with tears.

"Keep it," the barrister said; "keep the money yourself, my poor girl. Rich people do not pay for a lost cause in this generous way."

"I cannot do as you ask, sir, it is impossible," said Denise.

"Then the money does not come from you?" the barrister asked quickly.

"Pardon me," she replied, with a questioning glance at M. Bonnet—would God be angry with her for that lie?

The curé kept his eyes lowered.

"Very well," said the barrister, and, keeping one of the notes in his hand, he gave the other to the curé, "then I will divide it with the poor. And now, Denise, this is certainly mine"—he held out the note as he spoke—"will you give me your velvet ribbon and gold cross in exchange for it? I will hang the cross above my chimney-piece in memory of the purest and kindest girl's heart which I shall ever meet with, I doubt not, in my career."

"There is no need to buy it," cried Denise, "I will give it you," and she took off her gilt cross and handed it to the lawyer.

"Very well, sir," said the curé, "I accept the five hundred francs to pay the expenses of exhuming and removing the poor boy's body to the churchyard at Montégnaç. Doubt-



less God has forgiven him; Jean will rise again with all my flock at the Last Day, when the just and the penitent sinner will be summoned to sit at the Father's right hand."

"So be it," said the barrister. He took Denise's hand and drew her towards him to put a kiss on her forehead, a movement made with another end in view.

"My child," he said, "nobody at Montégnac has such a thing as a five hundred franc note; they are rather scarce in Limoges; people don't take them here without asking something for changing them. So this money has been given to you by somebody; you are not going to tell me who it was, and I do not ask you, but listen to this: if you have anything left to do here which has any reference to your poor brother, mind how you set about it. M. Bonnet and you and your brother will all three of you be watched by spies. People know that your family have gone away. If anybody recognizes you here, you will be surrounded before you suspect it."

"Alas!" she said, "I have nothing left to do here."

"She is cautious," said the lawyer to himself, as he went to the door with her. "She has been warned, so let her extricate herself."

It was late September, but the days were as hot as in the summer. The Bishop was giving a dinner party. The local authorities, the public prosecutor, and the first *avocat général* were among the guests. Discussions were started, which grew lively in the course of the evening, and it was very late before they broke up. Whist and backgammon, that game beloved of bishops, were the order of the day. It happened that about eleven o'clock the public prosecutor stepped out upon the upper terrace, and from the corner where he stood saw a light on the island, which the Abbé Gabriel and the Bishop had already fixed upon as the central spot and clew to the inexplicable tangle about Tascheron's crime—on Véronique's Isle of France in fact. There was no apparent reason why anybody should kindle a fire in the middle of the Vienne at that time of night—then, all at once, the idea which had struck the Bishop and his secretary flashed upon the public prosecutor's brain, with a light as

sudden as that of the fire which shot up out of the distant darkness.

"What a set of great fools we have all been!" cried he, "but we have the accomplices now."

He went up to the drawing-room again, found out M. de Granville, and said a word or two in his ear; then both of them vanished. But the Abbé de Rastignac, courteously attentive, watched them go out, saw that they went towards the terrace, and noticed too that fire on the shore of the island.

"It is all over with her," thought he.

The messengers of justice arrived on the spot—too late. Denise and Louis-Marie (whom his brother Jean had taught to dive) were there, it is true, on the bank of the Vienne at a place pointed out by Jean; but Louis-Marie had already dived four times, and each time had brought up with him twenty thousand francs in gold. The first installment was secured in a bandanna with the four corners tied up. As soon as the water had been wrung from the handkerchief, it was thrown on a great fire of dry sticks, kindled beforehand. A shawl contained the second, and the third was secured in a lawn handkerchief. Just as Denise was about to fling the fourth wrapper into the fire, the police came up accompanied by a commissary, and pounced upon a very important clew, as they thought, which Denise suffered them to seize without the slightest emotion. It was a man's pocket-handkerchief, which still retained some stains of blood in spite of its long immersion. Questioned forthwith as to her proceedings, Denise said that she had brought the stolen money out of the river, as her brother bade her. To the commissary, inquiring why she had burned the wrappings, she answered that she was following out her brother's instructions. Asked what the wrappings were, she replied boldly, and with perfect truth, "A bandanna handkerchief, a lawn handkerchief, and a shawl."

The handkerchief which had just been seized belonged to her brother.

This fishing expedition and the circumstances accompanying it made plenty of talk in Limoges. The shawl in par-

ticular confirmed the belief that there was a love affair at the bottom of Tascheron's crime.

"He is dead, but he shields her still," commented one lady, when she heard these final revelations, so cleverly rendered useless.

"Perhaps there is some married man in Limoges who will find that he is a bandanna short, but he will perforce hold his tongue," smiled the public prosecutor.

"Little mistakes in one's wardrobe have come to be so compromising, that I shall set about verifying mine this very evening," said old Mme. Perret, smiling too.

"Whose are the dainty little feet that left the footmarks, so carefully erased?" asked M. de Granville.

"Pshaw! perhaps they belong to some ugly woman," returned the *avocat général*.

"She has paid dear for her slip," remarked the Abbé de Grancour.

"Do you know what all this business goes to prove?" put in the *avocat général*. "It just shows how much women have lost through the Revolution, which obliterated social distinctions. Such a passion is only to be met with nowadays in a man who knows that there is an enormous distance between him and the woman he loves."

"You credit love with many vanities," returned the Abbé Dutheil.

"What does Mme. Graslin think?" asked the prefect.

"What would you have her think? She was confined, as she told me she would be, on the day of the execution, and has seen nobody since; she is dangerously ill," said M. de Granville.

Meanwhile, in another room in Limoges, an almost comic scene was taking place. The des Vanneaulx's friends were congratulating them upon the restitution of their inheritance.

"Well, well," said Mme. des Vanneaulx, "they ought to have let him off, poor man. It was love, and not mercenary motives, that brought him to it; he was neither vicious nor wicked."

“He behaved like a thorough gentleman,” said the *Sieur des Vanneaulx*. “If I knew where his family was; I would do something for them; they are good people, those *Tascherons*. ”

When *Mme. Graslin* was well enough to rise, towards the end of the year 1829, after the long illness which followed her confinement, and obliged her to keep her bed in absolute solitude and quiet, she heard her husband speak of a rather considerable piece of business which he wanted to conclude. The *Navarreins* family thought of selling the forest of *Montégnac* and the waste lands which they owned in the neighborhood. *Graslin* had not yet put into execution a clause in his wife's marriage settlement, which required that her dowry should be invested in land; he had preferred to put her money out at interest through the bank, and already had doubled her capital. On this, *Véronique* seemed to recollect the name of *Montégnac*, and begged her husband to carry out the contract by purchasing the estate for her.

*M. Graslin* wished very much to see *M. Bornet*, to ask for information concerning the forest and lands which the *Duc de Navarreins* thought of selling. The *Duc de Navarreins*, be it said, foresaw the hideous struggle which the *Prince de Polignac* had made inevitable between the Liberals and the Bourbon dynasty; and augured the worst, for which reasons he was one of the boldest opponents of the *coup-d'état*. The Duke had sent his man of business to *Limoges* with instructions to sell, if a bidder could be found for so large a sum of money, for His Grace recollected the Revolution of 1789 too well not to profit by the lessons then taught to the aristocracy. It was this man of business who, for more than a month, had been at close quarters with *Graslin*, the shrewdest old fox in *Limousin*, and the only man whom common report singled out as being able to pay down the price of so large an estate on the spot.

At a word sent by the *Abbé Dutheil*, *M. Bonnet* hastened to *Limoges* and the *Hôtel Graslin*. *Véronique* would have prayed the curé to dine with her; but the banker only allowed

M. Bonnet to go up to his wife's room after he had kept him a full hour in his private office, and obtained information which satisfied him so well, that he concluded his purchase out of hand, and the forest and domain of Montégnac became his (Graslin's) for five hundred thousand francs. He acquiesced in his wife's wish, stipulating that this purchase and any outlay relating thereto should be held to accomplish the clause in her marriage contract as to her fortune. Graslin did this the more willingly because the piece of honesty now cost him nothing.

At the time of Graslin's purchase the estate consisted of the forest of Montégnac, some thirty thousand acres in extent, but too inaccessible to bring in any money, the ruined castle, the gardens, and some five thousand acres in the uncultivated plains under Montégnac. Graslin made several more purchases at once, so as to have the whole of the first peak of the Corrèzien range in his hands, for there the vast forest of Montégnac came to an end. Since the taxes had been levied upon it, the Duc de Navarreins had not drawn fifteen thousand francs a year from the manor, formerly one of the richest tenures in the kingdom. The lands had escaped sale when put up under the Convention, partly because of their barrenness, partly because it was a recognized fact that nothing could be made of them.

When the curé came face to face with the woman of whom he had heard, a woman whose cleverness and piety were well known, he started in spite of himself. At this time Véronique had entered upon the third period of her life, a period in which she was to grow greater by the exercise of the loftiest virtues, and become a totally different woman. To the Raphael's Madonna, hidden beneath the veil of small-pox scars, a beautiful, noble, and impassioned woman had succeeded, a woman afterwards laid low by inward sorrows, from which a saint emerged. Her complexion had taken the sallow tint seen in the austere faces of Abbesses of ascetic life. A yellowish hue had overspread the temples, grown less imperious now. The lips were paler, the red of the opening pomegranate flower had changed into the paler crimson of the Bengal rose. Between the nose and the corners

of the eyes sorrow had worn two pearly channels, down which many tears had coursed in secret; much weeping had worn away the traces of smallpox. It was impossible not to fix your eyes on the spot where a network of tiny blue veins stood out swollen and distended with the full pulses that throbbed there, as if they fed the source of many tears. The faint brownish tinge about the eyes alone remained, but there were dark circles under them now, and wrinkles in the eyelids which told of terrible suffering. The lines in the hollow cheeks bore record of solemn thoughts. The chin, too, had shrunk, it had lost its youthful fullness of outline, and this scarcely to the advantage of a face which wore an expression of pitiless austerity, confined however solely to Véronique herself. At twenty-nine years of age her hair, one of her greatest beauties, had faded and grown scanty; she had been obliged to pull out a large quantity of white hair, bleached during her confinement. Her thinness was shocking to see. In spite of the doctor's orders, she had persisted in nursing her child herself; and the doctor was not disposed to let people forget this when all his evil prognostications were so thoroughly fulfilled.

"See what a difference a single confinement has made in a woman!" said he. "And she worships that child of hers; but I have always noticed that the more a child costs the mother, the dearer it is."

All that remained of youth in Véronique's face lay in her eyes, wan though they were. An untamed fire flashed from the dark blue iris; all the life that had deserted the cold impassive mask of a face, expressionless now save for the charitable look which it wore when her poorer neighbors were spoken of, seemed to have taken refuge there. So the curé's first dismay and surprise abated somewhat as he went on to explain to her how much good a resident landowner might effect in Montégnac, and for a moment Véronique's face grew beautiful, lighted up by this unexpected hope which began to shine in upon her.

"I will go there," she said. "It shall be my property. I will ask M. Graslin to put some funds at my disposal, and I will enter into your charitable work with all my might.

Montégnac shall be cultivated, we will find water somewhere to irrigate the waste land in the plain. You are striking the rock, like Moses, and tears will flow from it!"

The Curé de Montégnac spoke of Mme. Graslin as a saint when his friends in Limoges asked him about her.

The very day after the purchase was completed, Graslin sent an architect to Montégnac. He was determined to restore the castle, the gardens, terraces, and park, to reclaim the forest by a plantation, putting an ostentatious activity into all that he did.

Two years later a great misfortune befell Mme. Graslin. Her husband, in spite of his prudence, was involved in the commercial and financial disasters of 1830. The thought of bankruptcy, or of losing three millions, the gains of a lifetime of toil, were both intolerable to him. The worry and anxiety aggravated the inflammatory disease, always lurking in his system, the result of impure blood. He was compelled to take to his bed. In Véronique a friendly feeling towards Graslin had developed during her pregnancy, and dealt a fatal blow to the hopes of her admirer, M. de Granville. By careful nursing she tried to save her husband's life, but only succeeded in prolonging a suffering existence for a few months. This respite, however, was very useful to Grossetête, who, foreseeing the end, consulted with his old comrade, and made all the necessary arrangements for a prompt realization.

In April 1831 Graslin died, and his widow's despairing grief only sobered down into Christian resignation. From the first Véronique had wished to give up her whole fortune to her husband's creditors; but M. Graslin's estate proved to be more than sufficient. It was Grossetête who wound up his affairs, and two months after the settlement Mme. Graslin found herself the mistress of the domains of Montégnac and of six hundred and sixty thousand francs, all her own; and no blot rested on her son's name. No one had lost anything through Graslin—not even his wife; and Francis Graslin had about a hundred thousand francs.

Then M. de Granville, who had reason to know Véronique's nature and loftiness of soul, came forward as a suitor; but,

to the amazement of all Limoges, Mme. Graslin refused the newly-appointed public prosecutor, on the ground that second marriages were discountenanced by the Church. Grossetête, a man of unerring forecast and sound sense, advised Véronique to invest the rest of M. Graslin's fortune and her own in the Funds, and effected this for her himself at once, in the month of July, when the three per cents. stood at fifty. St Francis had an income of six thousand livres, and his mother about forty thousand. Véronique was still the greatest fortune in the department.

All was settled at last, and Mme. Graslin gave out that she meant to leave Limoges to live nearer to M. Bonnet. Again she sent for the curé, to consult him about his work at Montégnac, in which she was determined to share; but he generously tried to dissuade her, and to make it clear to her that her place was in society.

"I have sprung from the people, and I mean to return to them," said she.

The curé's great love for his own village resisted the more feebly when he learned that Mme. Graslin had arranged to make over her house in Limoges to M. Grossetête. Certain sums were due to the banker, and he took the house at its full value in settlement.

Mme. Graslin finally left Limoges towards the end of August 1831. A troop of friends gathered about her, and went with her as far as the outskirts of the town; some of them went the whole first stage of the journey. Véronique traveled in a calèche with her mother; the Abbé Dutheil, recently appointed to a bishopric, sat opposite them with old M. Grossetête. As they went through the Place d'Aine, Véronique's emotion was almost uncontrollable; her face contracted; every muscle quivered with the pain; she snatched up her child, and held him tightly to her in a convulsive grasp, while La Sauviat tried to cover her emotion by following her example—it seemed that La Sauviat was not unprepared for something of this kind.

Chance so ordered it that Mme. Graslin caught a glimpse of the house where her father had lived; she clutched Mme.



Sauviat's hand, great tears filled her eyes and rolled down her cheeks. When Limoges was fairly left behind, she turned and took a last farewell glance; and all her friends noticed a certain look of happiness in her face. When the public prosecutor, the young man of five-and-twenty whom she had declined to marry, came up and kissed her hand with lively expressions of regret, the newly-made Bishop noticed something strange in Véronique's eyes: the dark pupils dilated till the blue became a thin ring about them. It was unmistakable that some violent revulsion took place within her.

"Now I shall never see him again!" she said in her mother's ear, but there was not the slightest trace of feeling in the impassive old face as Mme. Sauviat received that confidence.

Grossetête, the shrewd old banker, sitting opposite, watching the women with keen eyes, had not discovered that Véronique hated this man, whom for that matter she received as a visitor. In things of this kind a churchman is far clearer-sighted than other men, and the Bishop surprised Véronique by a glance that revealed an ecclesiastic's perspicacity.

"You have no regret in leaving Limoges?" the Bishop said to Mme. Graslin.

"You are leaving the town," she replied. "And M. Grossetête scarcely ever comes among us now," she added, with a smile for her old friend as he said good-by.

The Bishop went the whole of the way to Montégnaç with Véronique.

"I ought to have made this journey in mourning," she said in her mother's ear as they walked up the hill near Saint-Léonard.

The old woman turned her crabbed, wrinkled face, and laid her finger on her lips; then she pointed to the Bishop, who was giving the child a terrible scrutiny. Her mother's gesture first, and yet more the significant expression in the Bishop's eyes, made Mme. Graslin shudder. The light died out of her face as she looked out across the wide gray stretch of plain before Montégnaç, and melancholy overcame her.

All at once she saw the curé coming to meet her, and made him take a seat in the carriage.

"This is your domain," said M. Bonnet, indicating the level waste.

## IV

## MME. GRASLIN AT MONTÉGNAC

IN a few moments the township of Montégnac came in sight; the hillside and the conspicuous new buildings upon it shone golden in the light of the sunset; it was a lovely landscape like an oasis in the desert, with a picturesque charm of its own, due to the contrast with its setting. Mme. Graslin's eyes began to fill with tears. The curé pointed out a broad white track like a scar on the hillside.

"That is what my parishioners have done to show their gratitude to their lady of the manor," he said. "We can drive the whole way to the château. The road is finished now, and has not cost you a sou; we shall put in a row of trees beside it in two months' time. My Lord Bishop can imagine how much toil, thought, and devotion went to the making of such a change."

"And they have done this themselves!" said the Bishop.

"They would take nothing in return, my lord. The poorest lent a hand, for they all knew that one who would be like a mother to them was coming to live among us."

There was a crowd at the foot of the hill, all the village was there. Guns were fired off, and mortars exploded, and then the two prettiest girls of Montégnac, in white dresses, came to offer flowers and fruit to Mme. Graslin.

"That I should be welcomed here like this!" she cried, clutching M. Bonnet's hand as if she felt that she was falling over a precipice.

The crowd went up as far as the great iron gateway, whence Mme. Graslin could see her château. At first sight the splendor of her dwelling was a shock to her. Stone for building is scarce in this district, for the native granite is hard and exceedingly difficult to work; so Graslin's architect

had used brick for the main body of the great building, there being plenty of brick earth in the forest of Montégnac, and wood for the felling. All the woodwork and stone in fact came also from the forest and the quarries in it. But for these economies, Graslin must have been put to a ruinous expense; but as it was, the principal outlay was for wages, carriage, and salaries, and the money circulating in the township had put new life into it.

At a first glance the château stood up a huge red mass, scored with dark lines of mortar, and outlined with gray, for the facings and quoins and the string courses along each story were of granite, each block being cut in facets diamond fashion. The surface of the brick walls round the courtyard (a sloping oval like the courtyard of Versailles) was broken by slabs of granite surrounded by bosses, and set at equal distances. Shrubs had been planted under the walls, with a view to obtaining the contrasts of their various foliage. Two handsome iron gateways gave access on the one hand to the terrace which overlooked Montégnac, and on the other to a farm and outbuildings. The great gateway at the summit of the new road, which had just been finished, had a neat lodge on either side, built in the style of the sixteenth century.

The façade of the château fronted the courtyard and faced the west. It consisted of three towers, the central tower being connected with the one on either side of it by two wings. The back of the house was precisely similar, and looked over the gardens towards the east. There was but one window in each tower on the side of the courtyard and gardens, each wing having three. The center tower was built something after the fashion of a campanile, the corner stones were vermiculated, and here some delicate sculptured work had been sparingly introduced. Art is timid in the provinces; and though in 1829 some progress had been made in architectural ornament (thanks to certain writers), the owners of houses shrank at that time from an expense which lack of competition and scarcity of craftsmen rendered somewhat formidable.

The tower at either end (three windows in depth) was

crowned by a high-pitched roof, with a granite balustrade by way of decoration; each angle of the pyramid was sharply cut by an elegant balcony lined with lead, and surrounded by cast-iron railings, and an elegantly sculptured window occupying each side of the roof. All the door and window cornices on each story were likewise ornamented with carved work copied from Chinese palace fronts. The three side windows of the southern tower looked out over Montégnac, the northern gave a view of the forest.

From the eastern windows you could see beyond the gardens that part of Montégnac where the Tascherons had lived, and far down below in the valley the road which led to the chief town in the arrondissement. From the west front which gave upon the courtyard, you saw the wide map of the plain stretching away on the Montégnac side to the mountains of the Corrèze, and elsewhere to the circle of the horizon, where it blended with the sky.

The wings were low, the single story being built in the mansard roof, in the old French style, but the towers at either end rose a story higher. The central tower was crowned by a sort of flattened dome like the Clock Towers of the Tuileries or the Louvre; the single room in the turret was a sort of belvedere, and fitted with a turret-clock. Ridge tiles had been used for economy's sake; the massive balks of timber from the forest readily carried the enormous weight of the roof.

Graslin's "folly," as he called the château, had brought five hundred thousand francs into the commune. He had planned the road before he died, and the commune out of gratitude had finished it. Montégnac had moreover grown considerably. Behind the stables and out-buildings, on the north side of the hill where it slopes gradually down into the plain, Graslin had begun to build the steadings of a farm on a large scale, which showed that he had meant to turn the waste land in the plain to account. The plantations considered indispensable by M. Bonnet were still proceeding under the direction of a head gardener with six men, who were lodged in the out-buildings.

The whole ground floor of the château, taken up by

sitting-rooms, had been splendidly furnished, but the second story was rather bare, M. Graslin's death having suspended the upholsterer's operations.

"Ah! my lord," said Mme. Graslin, turning to the Bishop, after they had been through the château, "I had thought to live here in a thatched cottage. Poor M. Graslin committed many follies——"

"And you——" the Bishop added, after a pause, and Mme. Graslin's light shudder did not escape him—"you are about to do charitable deeds, are you not?"

She went to her mother, who held little Francis by the hand, laid her hand on the old woman's arm, and went with the two as far as the long terrace which rose above the church and the parsonage; all the houses in the village, rising stepwise up the hillside, could be seen at once. The curé took possession of M. Dutheil, and began to point out the various features of the landscape; but the eyes of both ecclesiastics soon turned to the terrace, where Véronique and her mother stood motionless as statues; the older woman took out a handkerchief and wiped her eyes, her daughter leant upon the balustrade, and seemed to be pointing out the church below.

"What is the matter, madame?" the Curé Bonnet asked, turning to La Sauviat.

"Nothing," answered Mme. Graslin, coming towards the two priests and facing them. "I did not know that the churchyard would be right under my eyes——"

"You can have it removed; the law is on your side."

"*The law!*" the words broke from her like a cry of pain.

Again the Bishop looked at Véronique. But she—tired of meeting that somber glance, which seemed to lay bare the soul and discover her secret in its depths, a secret buried in a grave in that churchyard—cried out—

"Very well, then—yes!"

The Bishop laid his hand over his eyes, so overwhelmed by this, that for some moments he stood lost in thought.

"Hold her up," cried the old mother; "she is turning pale."

"The air here is so keen, I have taken a chill," murmured

Mme. Graslin, and she sank fainting as the two ecclesiastics caught her in their arms. They carried her into the house, and when she came to herself again she saw the Bishop and the curé kneeling in prayer for her.

"May the angel which has visited you ever stay beside you!" the Bishop said, as he gave her his blessing. "Adieu, my daughter."

Mme. Graslin burst into tears at the words.

"Is she really saved?" cried the old mother.

"In this world and in the next," the Bishop turned to answer, as he left the room.

Mme. Graslin had been carried by her mother's orders to a room on the first floor of the southern tower; the windows looked out upon the churchyard and the south side of Montégnaç. Here she chose to remain, and installed herself there as best she could with her maid Aline, and little Francis. Mme. Sauviat's room naturally was near her daughter's.

It was some days before Mme. Graslin recovered from the cruel agitation which prostrated her on the day of her arrival, and, moreover, her mother insisted that she must stay in bed in the morning. In the evening, however, Véronique came to sit on a bench on the terrace, and looked down on the church and parsonage and into the churchyard. In spite of mute opposition on Mme. Sauviat's part, Véronique contracted a habit of always sitting in the same place and giving way to melancholy broodings; it was almost a mania.

"Madame is dying," Aline said to the old mother.

At last the two women spoke to the curé; and he, good man, who had shrunk from intruding himself upon Mme. Graslin, came assiduously to see her when he learned that she was suffering from some malady of the soul, carefully timing his visits so that he always found Véronique and the child, both in mourning, out on the terrace. The country was already beginning to look dreary and somber in the early days of October.

When Véronique first came to the château, M. Bonnet had seen at once that she was suffering from some hidden wound, but he thought it better to wait until his future

penitent should give him her confidence. One evening, however, he saw an expression in Mme. Graslin's eyes that warned him to hesitate no longer—the dull apathy of a mind brooding over the thought of death. He set himself to check the progress of this cruel disease of the mind.

At first there was a sort of struggle between them, a fence of empty words, each of them striving to disguise their thoughts. The evening was chilly, but for all that, Véronique sat out on the granite bench with little Francis on her knee. She could not see the churchyard, for Mme. Sauviat, leaning against the parapet, deliberately shut it out from sight. Aline stood waiting to take the child indoors. It was the seventh time that the curé had found Véronique there on the terrace. He spoke—

“I used to think that you were merely sad, madame, but,” and he lowered his voice and spoke in her ear, “this is despair. Despair is neither Christian nor Catholic.”

“Oh!” she exclaimed, with an intent glance at the sky, and a bitter smile stole over her lips, “what would the Church leave to a damned soul, if not despair?”

Her words revealed to the curé how far this soul had been laid waste.

“Ah! you are making for yourself a hell out of this hill-side, when it should rather be a Calvary whence your soul might lift itself up towards heaven.”

“I am too humble now,” she said, “to put myself on such a pedestal,” and her tone was a revelation of the depth of her self-scorn.

Then a sudden light flashed across the curé—one of the inspirations which come so often and so naturally to noble and pure souls who live with God. He took up the child and kissed him on the forehead. “Poor little one!” he said, in a fatherly voice, and gave the child to the nurse, who took him away. Mme. Sauviat looked at her daughter, and saw how powerfully those words had wrought on her, for Véronique's eyes, long dry, were wet with tears. Then she too went, with a sign to the priest.

“Will you take a walk on the terrace?” suggested M. Bonnet when they were alone. “You are in my charge; I am

accountable to God for your sick soul," and they went towards the end of the terrace above "Tascherons'."

"Leave me to recover from my prostration," she said.

"Your prostration is the result of pernicious broodings."

"Yes," she said, with the naïveté of pain, too sorely troubled to fence any longer.

"I see," he answered; "you have sunk into the depths of indifference. If physical pain passes a certain point it extinguishes modesty, and so it is with mental anguish, it reaches a degree when the soul grows faint within us; I know."

Véronique was not prepared for this subtle observation and tender pity in M. Bonnet; but as has been seen already, the quick sympathies of a heart unjaded by emotion of its own had taught him to detect and feel the pain of others among his flock with the maternal instinct of a woman. This apostolic tenderness, this *mens divini*, raises the priest above his fellow-men and makes of him a being divine. Mme. Graslin had not as yet looked deep enough into the curé's nature to discover the beauty hidden away in that soul, the source of its grace and freshness and its inner life.

"Ah! monsieur . . ." she began, and a glance and a gesture, such a gesture and glance as the dying give, put her secret into his keeping.

"I understand!" he answered. "But what then? What is to be done?"

Silently they went along the terrace towards the plain. To the bearer of good tidings, the son of Christ, the solemn moment seemed propitious.

"Suppose that you stood now before the Throne of God," he said, and his voice grew low and mysterious, "what would you say to Him?"

Mme. Graslin stopped short as if thunderstruck; a light shudder ran through her.

"I should say to Him as Christ said, 'My Father, Thou hast forsaken me!'" she answered simply. The tones of her voice brought tears to the curé's eyes.

"Oh, Magdalen, those are the very words I was waiting to hear!" he exclaimed, unable to refuse his admiration.



"You see, you appeal to God's justice! Listen, madame, Religion is the rule of God before the time. The Church reserves the right of judgment in all that concerns the soul. Man's justice is but the faint image of God's justice, a pale shadow of the eternal adapted to the temporal needs of society."

"What do you mean?"

"You are not judge in your own cause, you are amenable to God; you have no right to condemn nor to pardon yourself. God is the great Reviser of judgments, my daughter."

"Ah!" she cried.

"He *sees* to the origin of all things, while we only see the things themselves."

Again Véronique stopped. These ideas were new to her.

"To a soul as lofty as yours," he went on courageously, "I do not speak as to my poor parishioners; I owe it to you to use a different language. You who have so cultivated your mind can rise to the knowledge of the spirit of the Catholic religion, which words and symbols must express and make visible to the eyes of babes and the poor. Follow what I am about to say carefully, for it refers to you; and if the point of view which I take for the moment seems wide, it is none the less your own case which I am considering.

"Justice, devised for the protection of society, is based upon a theory of the equality of individuals. Society, which is nothing but an aggregation of facts, is based on *inequality*. So there is a fundamental discrepancy between justice and fact. Should the law exercise a restraining or encouraging influence on the progress of society? In other words, should the law oppose itself to the internal tendency of society, so as to maintain things as they are; or, on the other hand, should the law be more flexible, adapt itself, and keep pace with the tendency so as to guide it? No maker of laws since men began to live together has taken it upon himself to decide that problem. All legislators have been content to analyze facts, to indicate those which seemed to them to be blameworthy or criminal, and to prescribe punishments or rewards. Such is law as man has made it. It is powerless

to prevent evil-doing; powerless no less to prevent offenders who have been punished from offending again.

"Philanthropy is a sublime error. Philanthropy vainly applies severe discipline to the body, while it cannot find the balm which heals the soul. Philanthropy conceives projects, sets forth theories, and leaves mankind to carry them out by means of silence, work, and discipline—dumb methods, with no virtue in them. Religion knows nought of these imperfections; for her, life extends beyond this world; for Religion, we are all of us fallen creatures in a state of degradation, and it is this very view of mankind which opens out to us an inexhaustible treasure of indulgence. All of us are on the way to our complete regeneration, some of us are further advanced, and some less, but none of us are infallible; the Church is prepared for sins, ay, and even for crimes. In a criminal, society sees an individual to be cut off from its midst, but the Church sees in him a soul to be saved. And more, far more! . . . Inspired by God, whose dealings with man She watches and ponders, the Church admits our inequality as human beings, and takes the disproportionate burden into account, and we who are so unequal in heart, in body or mind, in courage or aptitude, are made equal by repentance. In this, madame, equality is no empty word; we can be, and are, all equal through our sentiments.

"One idea runs through all religions, from the uncouth fetichism of the savage to the graceful imaginings of the Greek and the profound and ingenious doctrines of India and Egypt, an idea that finds expression in all cults joyous or gloomy, a conviction of man's fall and of his sin, whence, everywhere, the idea of sacrifice and redemption.

"The death of the Redeemer who died for the whole human race is for us a symbol; this, too, we must do for ourselves; we must redeem our errors!—redeem our sins!—redeem our crimes! There is no sin beyond redemption—all Catholicism lies in that. It is the wherefore of the holy sacraments which assist in the work of grace and sustain the repentant sinner. And though one should weep, madame, and sigh like the Magdalen in the desert, this is but the beginning—

an action is the end. The monasteries wept, but acted too; they prayed, but they civilized; they were the active practical spreaders of our divine religion. They built, and planted, and tilled Europe; they rescued the treasures of learning for us; to them we owe the preservation of our jurisprudence, our traditions of statecraft and art. The sites of those centers of light will be forever remembered in Europe with gratitude. Most modern towns sprang up about a monastery.

"If you believe that God is to judge you, the Church, using my voice, tells you that there is no sin beyond redemption through the good works of repentance. The evil we have wrought is weighed against the good that we have done by the great hands of God. Be yourself a monastery here; it is within your power to work miracles once more. For you, work must be prayer. Your work should be to diffuse happiness among those above whom you have been set by your fortune and your intellect, and in all ways, even by your natural position, for the height of your château above the village is a visible expression of your social position."

They were turning towards the plains as he spoke, so that the curé could point out the village on the lower slopes of the hill and the château towering above it. It was half-past four in the afternoon. A shaft of yellow sunlight fell across the terrace and the garden; it lighted up the château and brought out the pattern of the gleaming gilt scroll-work on the corner balconies high up on the towers; it lit the plain which stretched into the distance divided by the road, a sober gray ribbon with no embroidery of trees as yet to outline a waving green border on either side. Véronique and M. Bonnet passed the end of the château and came into the courtyard, beyond which the stables and farm buildings lay in sight, and further yet the forest of Montégnac; the sunlight slid across the landscape like a lingering caress. Even when the last glow of the sunset had faded except from the highest hills, it was still light enough in the plain below to see all the chance effects of color in the splendid tapestry of an autumn forest spread between Montégnac and the first peak of the chain of the Corrèze. The oak-

trees stood out like masses of Florentine bronze among the verdigris greens of the walnuts and chestnuts; the leaves of a few trees, the first to change, shone like gold among the others; and all these different shades of color were emphasized by the gray patches of bare earth. The trunks of leafless trees looked like pale columns; and every tint, red, tawny, and gray, picturesquely blended in the pale October sunshine, made a harmony of color with the fertile lowland, where the vast fallows were green as stagnant water. Not a tree stirred, not a bird—death in the plain, silence in the forest; a thought in the priest's mind, as yet unuttered, was to be the sole comment on that dumb beauty. A streak of smoke rose here and there from the thatched roofs of the village. The château seemed somber as its mistress's mood, for there is a mysterious law of uniformity, in virtue of which the house takes its character from the dominant nature within it, a subtle presence which hovers throughout. The sense of the curé's words had reached Mme. Graslin's brain; they had gone to her heart with all the force of conviction; the angelic resonance of his voice had stirred her tenderness; she stopped suddenly short. The curé stretched his arm out towards the forest; Véronique looked at him.

"Do you not see a dim resemblance between this and the life of humanity? His own fate for each of us! And what unequal lots there are among that mass of trees. Those on the highest ground have poorer soil and less water; they are the first to die——"

"And some are *cut down in the grace of their youth by some woman gathering wood!*" she said bitterly.

"Do not give way to those feelings again," he answered firmly, but with indulgence in his manner. "The forest has not been cut down, and that has been its ruin. Do you see something yonder there among the dense forest?"

Véronique could scarcely distinguish between the usual and unusual in a forest, but she obediently looked in the required direction, and then timidly at the curé.

"Do you not observe," he said, seeing in that glance that Véronique did not understand, "that there are strips where all the trees of every kind are still green?"

"Oh, so there are!" she cried. "How is it?"

"In those strips of green lies a fortune for Montégnac and for you—a vast fortune, as I pointed out to M. Grasin. You can see three furrows; those are three valleys, the streams there are lost in the torrent-bed of the Gabou. The Gabou is the boundary line between us and the next commune. All through September and October it is dry, but when November comes it will be full. All that water runs to waste; but it would be easy to make one or two weirs across from side to side of the valley to keep back the water (as Riquet did at Saint-Ferréol, where there are huge reservoirs which supply the Languedoc canal); and it would be easy to increase the volume of the water by turning several little streams in the forest into the river. Wisely distributing it as required, by means of sluices and irrigation trenches, the whole plain can be brought into cultivation, and the overflow, besides, could be turned into our little river.

"You will have fine poplars along all the channels, and you will raise cattle in the finest possible meadows. What is grass but water and sun? You could grow corn in the plain, there is quite enough depth of earth; with so many trenches there will be moisture to enrich the soil; the poplar trees will flourish along the channels and attract the rain clouds, and the fields will absorb the principles of the rain: these are the secrets of the luxuriant greenness of the valleys. Some day you will see life and joy and stir instead of this prevailing silence and barren dreariness. Will not this be a noble prayer? Will not these things occupy your idleness better than melancholy broodings?"

Véronique grasped the curé's hand, and made but a brief answer, but that answer was grand—

"It shall be done, monsieur."

"You have a conception of this great thing," he began again, "but you will not carry it out yourself. Neither you nor I have knowledge enough for the realization of a thought which might occur to anyone, but that raises immense practical difficulties; for simple and almost invisible as those difficulties are, they call for the most accurate skill of science. So to-morrow begin your search for the human

instruments which, in a dozen years' time, will contrive that the six thousand acres thus brought into cultivation shall yield you an income of six or seven thousand louis d'or. The undertaking will make Montégnac one of the richest communes in the department some day. The forest brings in nothing as yet; but sooner or later buyers will come here for the splendid timber treasures slowly accumulated by time, the only treasures which man cannot procure save by patient waiting, and cannot do without. Perhaps some day (who knows) the Government will take steps to open up ways of transporting timber grown here to its dockyards; but the Government will wait until Montégnac is ten times its present size before giving its fostering aid; for the Government, like Fortune, gives only to those who have. By that time this estate will be one of the finest in France; it will be the pride of your grandson, who may possibly find the château too small in proportion to his income."

"That is a future for me to live for," said Véronique.

"Such a work might redeem many errors," said the curé.

Seeing that he was understood, he endeavored to send a last shaft home by way of her intelligence, he had divined that in the woman before him the heart could only be reached through the brain; whereas, in other women, the way to the brain lies through the heart.

"Do you know what a great mistake you are making?" he asked, after a pause.

She looked at him with frightened eyes.

"Your repentance as yet is only the consciousness of a defeat. If there is anything fearful, it is the despair of Satan; and perhaps man's repentance was like this before Jesus Christ came on earth. But for us Catholics, repentance is the horror which seizes on a soul hurrying on its downward course, and in that shock God reveals Himself. You are like a Pagan Orestes; become a Saint Paul!"

"Your words have just wrought a complete change in me," she cried. "Now, oh! I want to live!"

"The spirit has overcome," the humble priest said to himself, as he went away, glad at heart. He had found food for the secret despair which was gnawing Mme. Graslin,

by giving to her repentance the form of a good and noble deed.

The very next day, therefore, Véronique wrote to M. Grossetête, and in answer to her letter three saddle-horses arrived from Limoges for her in less than a week. M. Bonnet made inquiries, and sent the postmaster's son to the château; the young fellow, Maurice Champion by name, was only too pleased to put himself at Mme. Graslin's disposal, with a chance of earning some fifty crowns. Véronique took a liking for the lad—round-faced, black-eyed, and black-haired, short, and well built—and he was at once installed as groom; he was to ride out with his mistress and to take charge of the horses.

The head forester at Montégnac was a native of Limoges, an old quartermaster in the Royal Guard. He had been transferred from another estate when the Duc de Navarreins began to think of selling the Montégnac lands, and wanted information to guide him in the matter; but in Montégnac Forest Jérôme Colorat only saw waste land, never likely to come under cultivation, timber valueless for lack of means of transport, gardens run wild, and a castle in ruins, calling for a vast outlay if it was to be set in order and made habitable. He saw wide rock-strewn spaces and conspicuous gray patches of granite even in the forest, and the honest but unintelligent servant took fright at these things. This was how the property had come into the market.

Mme. Graslin sent for this forester.

"Colorat," she said, "I shall most probably ride out to-morrow morning and every following day. You should know the different bits of outlying land which M. Graslin added to the estate, and you must point them out to me; I want to see everything for myself."

The servants at the château were delighted at this change in Véronique's life. Aline found out her mistress's old black riding habit, and mended it, without being told to do so, and next morning, with inexpressible pleasure, Mme. Sauviat saw her daughter dressed for a riding excursion. With Champion and the forester as her guides, Mme. Graslin set herself first of all to climb the heights. She wanted to

understand the position of the slopes and the glens, the natural roadways cleft in the long ridge of the mountain. She would measure her task, study the course of the streams, and see the rough material of the curé's schemes. The for-ester and Champion were often obliged to consult their memories, for the mountain paths were scarcely visible in that wild country. Colorat went in front, and Champion followed a few paces from her side.

So long as they kept to the denser forest, climbing and descending the continual undulations of a French mountain district, its wonders filled Véronique's mind. The mighty trees which had stood for centuries amazed her, until she saw so many that they ceased to be a surprise. Then others succeeded, full grown and ready for felling; or in a forest clearing some single pine risen to giant height; or, stranger still, some common shrub, a dwarf growth elsewhere, here risen, under some unusual conditions, to the height of a tree near as old as the soil in which it grew. The wreaths of mist rolling over the bare rocks filled her with indescribable feelings. Higher yet, pale furrows cut by the melting snows looked like scars far up on the mountain sides; there were bleak ravines in which no plant grew, hillside slopes where the soil had been washed away, leaving bare the rock clefts, where the hundred-year-old chestnuts grew straight and tall as pines in the Alps; sometimes they went by vast shifting sands, or boggy places where the trees are few; by fallen masses of granite, overhanging crags, dark glens, wide stretches of burnt grass or moor, where the heather was still in bloom, arid and lonely spots where the caper grows and the juniper, then through meadows covered with fine short grass, where the rich alluvial soil had been brought down and deposited century after century by the mountain torrents; in short, this rapid ride gave her something like a bird's-eye view of the land, a glimpse of the dreariness and grandeur, the strength and sweetness, of nature's wilder moods in the mountain country of midland France. And by dint of gazing at these pictures so various in form, but instinct with the same thought, the deep sadness expressed by the wild ruined land in its barrenness and neglect passed into



her own thoughts, and found a response in her secret soul. As, through some gap in the woods, she looked down on the gray stretch of plain below, or when their way led up some parched ravine where a few stunted shrubs starved among the boulders and the sand, by sheer reiteration of the same sights she fell under the influence of this stern scenery; it called up new ideas in her mind, stirred to a sense of the significance underlying these outward and visible forms. There is no spot in a forest but has this inner sense, not a clearing, not a thicket, but has an analogy in the labyrinth of the human thought.

Who is there with a thinking brain or a wounded heart that can pass through a forest and find the forest dumb? Before you are aware its voice is in your ears, a soothing or an awful voice, but more often soothing than awful. And if you were to examine very closely into the causes of this sensation, this solemn, incomplex, subduing, and mysterious forest-influence that comes over you, perhaps you will find its source in the sublime and subtle effect of the presence of so many creatures all obedient to their destinies, immovable in submission. Sooner or later the overwhelming sense of the abidingness of nature fills your heart and stirs deeper feelings, until at length you grow restless to find God in it. And so it was that with the silence of the mountain heights about her, out in the pure clear air with the forest scents in it, Véronique recovered, as she told M. Bonnet in the evening, the certainty of Divine mercy. She had glimpses of the possibility of an order of things above and beyond that in which her musings had hitherto revolved. She felt something like happiness. For a long time past she had not known such peace. Could it have been that she was conscious of a certain likeness between this country and the waste and dried-up places in her own soul? Did she look with a certain exultation on the troubles of nature with some thought that matter was punished here for no sin? Certain it is that her inner self was strongly stirred.

More than once Colorat and Champion looked at her, and then at each other, as if for them she were transfigured. One spot in particular that they reached in the steep bed of

a dry torrent seemed to Véronique to be unspeakably arid. It was with a certain surprise that she found herself longing to hear the sound of falling water in those scorching ravines.

"Always to love!" she thought. The words seemed like a reproach spoken aloud by a voice. In confusion she urged her horse blindly up towards the summit of the mountain of the Corèze, and in spite of her guides dashed up to the top (called the Living Rock), and stood there alone. For several moments she scanned the whole country below her. She had heard the secret voices of so many existences asking to live, and now something took place within her that determined her to devote herself to this work with all the perseverance which she had already displayed to admiration. She tied her horse's bridle to a tree and sat down on a slab of rock. Her eyes wandered over the land where nature showed herself so harsh a stepdame, and felt within her own heart something of the mother's yearning which she had felt over her child. Her half-unconscious meditations, which, to use her own beautiful metaphor, "had sifted her heart," had prepared her to receive the sublime teaching of the scene that lay before her.

"It was then," she told the curé, "that I understood that our souls needed to be tilled quite as much as the land."

The pale November sunlight shone over the wide landscape, but already a few gray clouds were gathering, driven across the sky by a cold west wind. It was now about three o'clock. Véronique had taken four hours to reach the point; but, as is the wont of those who are gnawed by profound inward misery, she gave no heed to anything without. At that moment her life shared the sublime movement of nature and dilated within her.

"Do not stay up there any longer, madame," said a man's voice, and something in its tone thrilled her. "You cannot reach home again in any direction if you do, for the nearest house lies a couple of leagues away, and it is impossible to find your way through the forest in the dark. And even those risks are nothing compared with the risk you are running where you are; in a few moments it will be deadly cold

on the peak; no one knows the why or wherefore, but it has been the death of many a one before now."

Mme. Graslin, looking down, saw a face almost black with sunburn, and two eyes that gleamed from it like tongues of fire. A shock of brown hair hung on either side of the face, and a long pointed beard wagged beneath it. The owner of the face respectfully raised one of the great broad-brimmed hats which the peasantry wear in the midland districts of France, and displayed a bald but magnificent brow, such as sometimes in a poor man compels the attention of passers-by. Véronique felt not the slightest fear; for a woman in such a position as hers, all the petty considerations which cause feminine tremors have ceased to exist.

"How did you come there?" she asked him.

"I live here, hard by," the stranger answered.

"And what do you do in this out-of-the-way place?" asked Véronique.

"I live in it."

"But how, and on what do you live?"

"They pay me a trifle for looking after this part of the forest," he said, pointing to the slopes of the peak opposite the plains of Montégnac. As he moved, Mme. Graslin caught sight of a game-bag and the muzzle of a gun, and any misgivings she might have entertained vanished forthwith.

"Are you a keeper?"

"No, madame. You can't be a keeper until you have been sworn, and you can't take the oath unless you have all your civic rights——"

"Then, who are you?"

"I am Farrabesche," said the man, in deep humility, with his eyes on the ground.

The name told Mme. Graslin nothing. She looked at the man before her. In an exceedingly kindly face there were signs of latent savagery; the uneven teeth gave an ironical turn, a suggestion of evil hardihood to the mouth and blood-red lips. In person he was of middle height, broad in the shoulders, short in the neck, which was very full and deeply sunk. He had the large hairy hands characteristic of violent tempered people capable of abusing their physical advan-

tages. His last words suggested some mystery, and his bearing, face, and figure all combined to give to that mystery a terrible interpretation.

"So you are in my employ?" Véronique said gently.

"Then have I the honor of speaking to Mme. Graslin?" asked Farrabesche.

"Yes, my friend," said she.

Farrabesche vanished with the speed of some wild creature after a frightened glance at his mistress. Veronique hastily mounted and went down to her two servants; the men were growing uneasy about her, for the inexplicable unwholesomeness of the Living Rock was well known in the country. Colorat begged her to go down a little valley into the plain. "It would be dangerous to return by the higher ground," he said; the tracks were hard to find, and crossed each other, and in spite of his knowledge of the country, he might lose himself.

Once in the plain, Véronique slackened the pace of her horse.

"Who is this Farrabesche whom you employ?" she asked, turning to the head forester.

"Did madame meet him?" exclaimed Colorat.

"Yes, but he ran away."

"Poor fellow! Perhaps he does not know how kind madame is."

"But, after all, what has he done?"

"Why, madame, Farrabesche is a murderer," Champion blurted out.

"Then, of course, he was pardoned, was he not?" Véronique asked in a tremulous voice.

"No, madame," Colorat answered. "Farrabesche was tried at the Assizes, and condemned to ten years' penal servitude; but he only did half his time, for they let him off the rest of the sentence; he came back from the hulks in 1827. He owes his life to M. le Curé, who persuaded him to give himself up. Judged by default, and sentenced to death, they would have caught him sooner or later, and he would have been in a bad way. M. Bonnet went out to look for him at the risk of his life. Nobody knows what he

said to Farrabesche; they were alone for a couple of days; on the third he brought Farrabesche back to Tulle, and there he gave himself up. M. Bonnet went to see a clever lawyer, and got him to take up Farrabesche's case; and Farrabesche came off with ten years in jail. M. le Curé used to go to see him while he was in prison; and that fellow yonder, who was a terror to the whole countryside, grew as meek as any maid, and let them take him off to prison quietly. When he came out again, he settled down hereabouts under M. le Curé's direction. People mind what they say to him; he always goes on Sundays and holidays to the services and to Mass. He has a seat in the church along with the rest of us, but he always keeps by himself close to the wall. He takes the sacrament from time to time, but at the Communion-table he keeps apart too."

"And this man has killed another man!"

"*One?*" asked Colorat; "he has killed a good many, he has! But he is not a bad sort for all that."

"Is it possible?" cried Véronique, and in her amazement she let the bridle fall on the horse's neck.

The head forester asked nothing better than to tell the tale.

"You see, madame," he said, "Farrabesche maybe was in the right at bottom. He was the last of the Farrebescches, an old family in the Corrèze; ay, yes! His eldest brother, Captain Farrabesche, was killed just ten years before in Italy, at Montenotte; only twenty-two he was, and a captain! That is what you might call bad luck, now, isn't it? And he had a little book-learning too; he could read and write, and he had made up his mind to be a general. They were sorry at home when he died, as well they might be, indeed! I was in the army with *The Other*<sup>1</sup> then; and I heard talk of his death. Oh! Captain Farrabesche fell gloriously; he saved the army, he did, and the Little Corporal! I was serving at that time under General Steingel, a German—that is to say, an Alsatian—a fine soldier he was, but shortsighted, and that was how he came by his end, some time after Captain Farrabesche. The youngest boy, that is the one yonder,

<sup>1</sup> *L'Autre*, viz. Napoleon.

was just six years old when he heard them talking about his big brother's death. The second brother went into the army too, but he went as a private soldier; and died a sergeant, first regiment of the Guard, a fine post, at the battle of Austerlitz, where, you see, madame, they maneuvered us all as smoothly as if it had been review day at the Tuileries. . . . I was there myself. Oh! I was lucky; I went through it all, and never came in for a single wound. . . . Well, then, our Farrabesche, the youngest, brave though he was, took it into his head that he would not go for a soldier. And 'tis a fact, the army did not suit that family. When the sous-préfet wanted him in 1811, he took to the woods; a 'refractory conscript,' eh! that's what they used to call them. Thereupon a gang of *chauffeurs* got hold of him by fair means or foul, and he took to warming people's feet at last! You understand that no one except M. le Curé knows what he did along with those rascals, asking their pardon! Many a brush he had with the gendarmes, and the regular troops as well! First and last he has seen seven skirmishes."

"People say that he killed two soldiers and three gendarmes!" put in Champion.

"Who is to know how many?" Colorat answered. "He did not tell them. At last, madame, almost all the others were caught; but he, an active young fellow, knowing the country as he did, always got away. That gang of *chauffeurs* used to hang on the outskirts of Brives and Tulle, and they would often come over here to lie low, because Farrabesche knew places where they could hide easily. After 1814 nobody troubled about him any more, the conscription was abolished; but he had to spend the year 1815 in the woods. As he could not sit down with his arms folded and live, he helped once more to stop a coach down below yonder in the ravine; but in the end he took M. le Curé's advice, and gave himself up. It was not easy to find witnesses; nobody dared give evidence against him. Then M. le Curé and his lawyer worked so hard for him, that they let him off with ten years. He was lucky after being a *chauffeur*, for a *chauffeur* he was."

“ But what is a *chauffeur*? ”

“ If you like, madame, I will just tell you the sort of thing they did, by all that I can make out from one and another, for you will understand that I was never a *chauffeur* myself. It was not nice, but necessity knows no law. It was like this: if they suspected some farmer or landowner of having money in his possession, seven or eight of them would drop in in the middle of the night, and they would light a fire and have supper there and then; when supper was over, if the master of the house would not give them as much money as they asked, they would tie his feet up to the pot-hook at the back of the fire, and would not let him go until they had what they asked for. That was all. They came in masks. With so many expeditions, there were a few mishaps. Lord! yes; there are obstinate folk and stingy people everywhere. There was a farmer once, old Cohegrue, a regular skin-flint he was, he let them burn his feet; and, well, the man died of it. There was M. David's wife too, not far from Brives; she died afterwards of the fright they gave her, simply seeing them tie her husband's feet. ‘ Just give them what you have! ’ she said to him as she went. He would not, and she showed them the hiding-place. For five years the *chauffeurs* were the terror of the countryside; but get this well into your pate—I beg pardon, madame!—that more than one of them belonged to good families, and that sort of people are not the ones to let themselves be nabbed.”

Mme. Graslin listened and made no reply. There was a moment's pause; then young Champion, eager to interest his mistress in his turn, was anxious to tell what he knew of Farrabesche.

“ Madame ought to hear the whole truth of the matter. Farrabesche has not his match on horseback or afoot. He will fell an ox with a blow of his fist! He can carry seven hundred-weight, that he can! and there is not a better shot anywhere. When I was a little chap they used to tell me tales about Farrabesche. One day he and three of his comrades were surprised; they fought till one was killed and two were wounded; well and good, Farrabesche saw that he was caught; bah! he jumps on a gendarme's horse behind

the man, claps spurs to the animal, which bolts off at a furious gallop and is out of sight, he gripping that gendarme round the waist all the time; he hugged the man so tight that after a while he managed to fling him off and ride single in the saddle, so he escaped and came by a horse. And he had the impudence to sell it directly afterwards ten leagues on the other side of Linoges. He lay in hiding for three months after that exploit, and no one could find him. They offered a reward of a hundred louis to anyone who would betray him."

"Another time," added Colorat, "as to those hundred louis put on his head by the prefect at Tulle, Farrabesche put a cousin of his in the way of earning it—Girieux it was, over at Vizay. His cousin denounced him, and seemed as if he meant to give him up. Oh! he actually gave him up; and very glad the gendarmes were to take him to Tulle. But he did not go far; they had to put him in the prison at Lubersac, and he got away the very first night, by way of a hole made by one of the gang, one Gabilleau, a deserter from the 17th, executed at Tulle, who was moved away the night before he expected to escape. A pretty character Farrabesche gained by these adventures. The troop had trusty friends, you know. And, besides, people liked the *chauffeurs*. Lord, they were quite different then from what they are nowadays, jolly fellows every one of them, that spent their money like princes. Just imagine it, madame; finds the gendarmes on his track one evening, does he? Well, he slipped through their fingers that time by lying twenty-four hours in a pond in a farmyard, drawing his breath through a hole in the straw at the edge of a dung heap. What did a little discomfort like that matter to him when he had spent whole nights up among the little branches at the very top of a tree where a sparrow could hardly hold, watching the soldiers looking for him, passing and repassing below. Farrabesche was one of the five or six *chauffeurs* whom they never could catch; for as he was a fellow-countryman, and joined the gang perforce (for, after all, he only took to the woods to escape the conscription), all the women took his part, and that counts for much."



"So Farrabesche has really killed several men," Mme. Graslin said again.

"Certainly," Colorat replied; "they even say that it was he who murdered the traveler in the coach in 1812; but the courier and postilion, the only witnesses who could have identified him, were dead when he came up for trial."

"And the robbery?" asked Mme. Graslin.

"Oh! They took all there was; but the twenty-five thousand francs which they found belonged to the Government."

For another league Mme. Graslin rode on in silence. The sun had set, and in the moonlight the gray plain looked like the open sea. Once or twice Champion and Colorat looked at Mme. Graslin, for her silence made them uneasy, and both were greatly disturbed to see that her eyes were red with much weeping and full of tears, which fell drop by drop and glittered on her cheeks.

"Oh! don't be sorry for him, madame," said Colorat. "The fellow led a jolly life, and has had pretty sweethearts. And if the police keep an eye on him now, he is protected by M. le Curé's esteem and friendship; for he repented, and in the convicts' prison he behaved in the most exemplary way. Everybody knows that he is as good as the best among us; only he is so proud, he has no mind to lay himself open to any slight, but he lives peaceably and does good after his fashion. Over the other side of the Living Rock he has ten acres or so of young saplings of his own planting; and when he sees a place for a tree in the forest, he will stick one of them in. Then he lops off the dead branches, and collects the wood, and does it up in fagots ready for poor people. And the poor people, knowing that they can have firewood all ready for the asking, go to him instead of helping themselves and damaging your woods. So if he still 'warms people's feet,' as you may say, it does them good now. Farrabesche is fond of your forest; he looks after it as if it were his own."

"And yet he lives! . . . quite alone." Mme. Graslin hastily added the last two words.

"Asking your pardon, madame, no. He is bringing up a little lad; going fifteen now he is," said Maurice Champion.

"Faith, yes, that he is," Colorat remarked, "for La Curieux had that child a good while before Farrabesche gave himself up."

"Is it his son?" asked Mme. Graslin.

"Well, everyone thinks so."

"And why did he not marry the girl?"

"Why? Because they would have caught him! And, besides, when La Curieux knew that he was condemned, she left the neighborhood, poor thing."

"Was she pretty?"

"Oh, my mother says that she was very much like—dear me! another girl who left the place too—very much like Denise Tascheron."

"Was he loved?" asked Mme. Graslin.

"Bah! yes, because he was a *chauffeur*!" said Colorat. "The women always fall in love with anything out of the way. But for all that, nothing astonished people hereabouts so much as this love affair. Catherine Curieux was a good girl who lived like a virgin saint; she was looked on as a paragon of virtue in her neighborhood over at Vizay, a large village in the Corrèze, on the boundary of two departments. Her father and mother were tenants of M. Brézac's. Catherine Curieux was quite seventeen years old at the time of Farrabesche's sentence. The Farrabesches were an old family out of the same district, but they settled on the Montégnac lands; they had the largest farm in the village. Farrabesche's father and mother are dead now, and La Curieux's three sisters are married; one lives at Aubusson, one at Limoges, and one at Saint-Léonard."

"Do you think that Farrabesche knows where Catherine is?" asked Mme. Graslin.

"If he knew, he would break his bounds. Oh! he would go to her. . . . As soon as he came back he asked her father and mother (through M. Bonnet) for the child. La Curieux's father and mother were taking care of the child; M. Bonnet persuaded them to give him up to Farrabesche."

"Does nobody know what became of her?"

"Bah!" said Colorat. "The lass thought herself ruined,

she was afraid to stop in the place! She went to Paris. What does she do there? That is the rub. As for looking for her in Paris, you might as well try to find a marble among the flints there in the plain."

Colorat pointed to the plain of Montégnaç as he spoke. By this time Mme. Graslin was only a few paces from the great gateway of the château. Mme. Sauviat, in anxiety, was waiting there for her with Aline and the servants; they did not know what to think of so long an absence.

"Well," said Mme. Sauviat, as she helped her daughter to dismount, "you must be horribly tired."

"No, dear mother," Mme. Graslin answered, in an unsteady voice, and Mme. Sauviat, looking at her daughter, saw that she had been weeping for a long time.

Mme. Graslin went into the house with Aline, her confidential servant, and shut herself into her room. She would not see her mother; and when Mme. Sauviat tried to enter, Aline met the old Auvergnate with "Madame is asleep."

The next morning Véronique set out on horseback, with Maurice as her sole guide. She took the way by which they had returned the evening before, so as to reach the Living Rock as quickly as might be. As they climbed up the ravine which separates the last ridge in the forest from the actual summit of the mountain (for the Living Rock, seen from the plain, seems to stand alone), Véronique bade Maurice show her the way to Farrabesche's cabin and wait with the horses until she came back. She meant to go alone. Maurice went with her as far as a pathway which turned off towards the opposite side of the Living Rock, furthest from the plain, and pointed out the thatched roof of a cottage half hidden on the mountain side; below it lay the nursery-ground of which Colorat had spoken.

It was almost noon. A thin streak of smoke rising from the cottage chimney guided Véronique, who soon reached the place, but would not show herself at first. At the sight of the little dwelling, and the garden about it, with its fence of dead thorns, she stood for a few moments lost in thoughts known to her alone. Several acres of grass land, inclosed

by a quickset hedge, wound away beyond the garden; the low spreading branches of apple and pear and plum trees were visible here and there in the field. Above the house, on the sandier soil of the high mountain slopes, there rose a splendid grove of tall chestnut trees, their topmost leaves turned yellow and serene.

Mme. Graslin pushed open the crazy wicket which did duty as a gate, and saw before her the shed, the little yard, and all the picturesque and living details of the dwellings of the poor. Something surely of the grace of the open fields hovers about them. Who is there that is not moved by the revelation of lowly, almost vegetative lives—the clothes drying on the hedge, the rope of onions hanging from the roof, the iron cooking pots set out in the sun, the wooden bench hidden among the honeysuckle leaves, the house-leeks that grow on the ridges of almost every thatched hovel in France?

Véronique found it impossible to appear unannounced in her keeper's cottage, for two fine hunting-dogs began to bark as soon as they heard the rustle of her riding-habit on the dead leaves; she gathered up her skirts on her arm, and went towards the house. Farrabesche and the boy were sitting on a wooden bench outside. Both rose to their feet and uncovered respectfully, but without a trace of servility.

"I have been told that you are seeing after my interests," said Véronique, with her eyes fixed on the lad; "so I determined to see your cottage and nursery of saplings for myself, and to ask you about some improvements."

"I am at your service, madame," replied Farrabesche.

Véronique was admiring the lad. It was a charming face; somewhat sunburned and brown, but in shape a faultless oval; the outlines of the forehead were delicately fine, the orange-colored eyes exceedingly bright and alert; the long dark hair, parted on the forehead, fell upon either side of the brow. Taller than most boys of his age, he was very nearly five feet high. His trousers were of the same coarse brown linen as his shirt; he wore a threadbare waistcoat of rough blue cloth with horn buttons, a short jacket of the material facetiously described as "Maurienne velvet," in which Savoyards

are wont to dress, and a pair of iron-bound shoes on his otherwise bare feet to complete the costume. His father was dressed in the same fashion; but instead of the little lad's brown woolen cap, Farrabesche wore the wide-brimmed peasant's hat. In spite of its quick intelligence, the child's face wore the look of gravity (evidently unforced) peculiar to young creatures brought up in solitude; he must have put himself in harmony with the silence and the life of the forest. Indeed, in both Farrabesche and his son the physical side of their natures seemed to be the most highly developed; they possessed the peculiar faculties of the savage—the keen sight, the alertness, the complete mastery of the body as an instrument, the quick hearing, the signs of activity and intelligent skill. No sooner did the boy's eyes turn to his father than Mme. Graslin divined that here was the limitless affection in which the prompting of natural instinct and deliberate thought were confirmed by the most effectual happiness.

“Is this the child of whom I have heard?” asked Véronique, indicating the lad.

“Yes, madame.”

Véronique signed to Farrabesche to come a few paces away. “But have you taken no steps towards finding his mother?” she asked.

“Madame does not know, of course, that I am not allowed to go beyond the bounds of the commune where I am living——”

“And have you never heard of her?”

“When my time was out,” he said, “the commissary paid over to me the sum of a thousand francs, which had been sent me, a little at a time, every quarter; the rules would not allow me to have it until I came out. I thought that no one but Catherine would have thought of me, as it was not M. Bonnet who sent it; so I am keeping the money for Benjamin.”

“And how about Catherine's relations?”

“They thought no more about her after she went away. Besides, they did their part by looking after the child.”

Véronique turned to go towards the house.

“Very well, Farrabesche,” she said; “I will have inquiry

made, so as to make sure that Catherine is still living, and where she is, and what kind of life she is leading——”

“Madame, whatever she may be, I shall look upon it as good fortune to have her for my wife,” the man cried in a softened tone. “It is for her to show reluctance, not for me. Our marriage will legitimate the poor boy, who has no suspicion yet of how he stands.”

The look in the father’s eyes told the tale of the life these two outcasts led in their voluntary exile; they were all in all to each other, like two fellow-countrymen in the midst of a desert.

“So you love Catherine?” asked Véronique.

“It is not so much that I love her, madame,” he answered, “as that, placed as I am, she is the one woman in the world for me.”

Mme. Graslin turned swiftly, and went as far as the chestnut trees, as if some pang had shot through her. The keeper thought that this was some whim of hers, and did not venture to follow. For nearly a quarter of an hour she sat, apparently engaged in looking out over the landscape. She could see all that part of the forest which lay along the side of the valley, with the torrent in the bottom; it was dry now, and full of boulders, a sort of huge ditch shut in between the forest-covered mountains above Montégnac and another parallel range, these last hills being steep though low, and so bare that there was scarcely so much as a starveling tree here and there to crown the slopes, where a few rather melancholy-looking birches, juniper bushes, and briars were trying to grow. This second range belonged to a neighboring estate, and lay in the department of the Corrèze; indeed, the cross road which meanders along the winding valley is the boundary line of the arrondissement of Montégnac, and also of the two estates. The opposite side of the valley beyond the torrent was quite unsheltered and barren enough. It was a sort of long wall with a slope of fine woodland behind it, and a complete contrast in its bleakness to the side of the mountain on which Farrabesche’s cottage stood. Gnarled and twisted forms on the one side, and on the other shapely growths and delicate curving lines; on the one side the dreary,

unchanging silence of a sloping desert, held in place by blocks of stone and bare, denuded rocks, and on the other, the contrasts of green among the trees. Many of them were leafless now, but the fine variegated tree trunks stood up straight and tall on each ledge, and the branches waved as the wind stirred through them. A few of them, the oaks, elms, beeches, and chestnuts which held out longer against the autumn than the rest, still retained their leaves—golden, or bronze, or purple.

In the direction of Montégnac the valley opens out so widely that the two sides describe a vast horseshoe. Véronique, with her back against a chestnut tree, could see glen after glen arranged like the stages of an amphitheater, the topmost crests of the trees rising one above the other in rows like the heads of spectators. On the other side of the ridge lay her own park, in which, at a later time, this beautiful hillside was included. Near Farrabesche's cottage the valley grew narrower and narrower, till it closed in as a gully scarce a hundred feet across.

The beauty of the view over which Mme. Graslin's eyes wandered, heedlessly at first, soon recalled her to herself. She went back to the cottage, where the father and son were standing in silence, making no attempt to explain the strange departure of their mistress. Véronique looked at the house. It was more solidly built than the thatched roof had led her to suppose; doubtless it had been left to go to ruin at the time when the Navarreins ceased to trouble themselves about the estate. No sport, no gamekeepers. But though no one had lived in it for a century, the walls held good in spite of the ivy and climbing plants which clung about them on every side. Farrabesche himself had thatched the roof when he received permission to live there; he had laid the stone flags on the floor, and brought in such furniture as there was.

Véronique went inside the cottage. Two beds, such as the peasants use, met her eyes; there was a large cupboard of walnut wood, a hutch for bread, a dresser, a table, three chairs, a few brown earthen platters on the shelves of the dresser; in fact, all the necessary household gear. A couple

of guns and a game-bag hung above the mantelshef. It went to Véronique's heart to see how many things the father had made for the little one; there was a toy man-of-war, a fishing smack, and a carved wooden cup, a chest wonderfully ornamented, a little box decorated with mosaic work in straw, a beautifully wrought crucifix and rosary. The rosary was made of plum-stones; on each a head had been carved with wonderful skill—Jesus Christ, the Apostles, the Madonna, St. John the Baptist, St. Anne, the two Magdalens.

"I did it to amuse the child during the long winter evenings," he said, with something of apology in his tone.

Jessamine and climbing roses covered the front of the house, and broke into blossom about the upper windows. Farrabesche used the first floor as a storeroom; he kept poultry, ducks, and a couple of pigs, and bought nothing but bread, salt, sugar, and such groceries as they needed. Neither he nor the lad drank wine.

"Everything that I have seen and heard of you," Mme. Graslin said at last, turning to Farrabesche, "has led me to take an interest in you which shall not come to nothing."

"This is M. Bonnet's doing, I know right well!" cried Farrabesche with touching fervor.

"You are mistaken; M. le Curé has said nothing to me of you as yet; chance or God, it may be, has brought it all about."

"Yes, madame, it is God's doing; God alone can work wonders for such a wretch as I."

"If your life has been a wretched one," said Mme. Graslin, in tones so low that they did not reach the boy (a piece of womanly feeling which touched Farrabesche), "your repentance, your conduct, and M. Bonnet's good opinion should go far to retrieve it. I have given orders that the buildings on the large farm near the château which M. Graslin planned are to be finished; you shall be my steward there; you will find scope for your energies and employment for your son. The public prosecutor at Limoges shall be informed of your case, and I will engage that the humiliating restrictions which make your life a burden to you shall be removed."

Farrabesche dropped down on his knees as if thunder-



struck at the words which opened out a prospect of the realization of hopes hitherto cherished in vain. He kissed the hem of Mme. Graslin's riding habit; he kissed her feet. Benjamin saw the tears in his father's eyes, and began to sob without knowing why.

"Do not kneel, Farrabesche," said Mme. Graslin; "you do not know how natural it is that I should do for you these things that I have promised to do. . . . Did you not plant those trees," she added, pointing to one or two pitch pines, Norway pines, firs, and larches at the base of the arid, thirsty hillside opposite.

"Yes, madame."

"Then is the soil better just there?"

"The water is always wearing the rocks away, so there is a little light soil washed down on to your land, and I took advantage of it, for all the valley down below the road belongs to you; the road is the boundary line."

"Then does a good deal of water flow down the length of the valley?"

"Oh! in a few days, madame, if the weather sets in rainy, you will maybe hear the roaring of the torrent over at the château! but even then it is nothing compared with what it will be when the snow melts. All the water from the whole mountain side there at the back of your park and gardens flows into it; in fact, all the streams hereabouts flow down to the torrent, and the water comes down like a deluge. Luckily for you, the tree roots on your side of the valley bind the soil together, and the water slips off the leaves, for the fallen leaves here in autumn are like an oilcloth cover for the land, or it would all be washed down into the valley bottom, and the bed of the torrent is so steep that I doubt whether the soil would stop there."

"What becomes of all the water?" asked Mme. Graslin.

Farrabesche pointed to the gully which seemed to shut in the valley below his cottage.

"It pours out over a chalky bit of level ground that separates Limousin from the Corrèze, and there it lies for several months in stagnant green pools, sinking slowly down into the soil. That is how the common came to be so un-

healthy that no one lives there, and nothing can be done with it. No kind of cattle will pasture on the reeds and rushes in those brackish pools. Perhaps there are three thousand acres of it altogether; it is the common land of three parishes; but it is just like the plain of Montégnac, you can do nothing with it. And down in your plain there is a certain amount of sand and a little soil among the flints, but here there is nothing but the bare tufa."

"Send for the horses; I mean to see all this for myself."

Mme. Graslin told Benjamin where she had left Maurice, and the lad went forthwith.

"They tell me that you know every yard of this country," Mme. Graslin continued; "can you explain to me how it happens that no water flows into the plain of Montégnac from my side of the ridge? there is not the smallest torrent there even in rainy weather or in the time of the melting of the snows."

"Ah! madame," Farrabesche answered. "M. le Curé, who is always thinking of the prosperity of Montégnac, guessed the cause, but had not proof of it. Since you came here, he told me to mark the course of every runnel in every little valley. I had been looking at the lie of the land yesterday, and was on my way back when I had the honor of meeting you at the base of the Living Rock. I heard the sound of horse hoofs, and I wanted to know who was passing this way. Madame, M. Bonnet is not only a saint, he is a man of science. 'Farrabesche,' said he (I being at work at the time on the road which the commune finished up to the château for you)—'Farrabesche, if no water from this side of the hill reaches the plain below, it must be because nature has some sort of drainage arrangement for carrying it off elsewhere.'—Well, madame, the remark is so simple that it looks downright trite, as if any child might have made it. But nobody since Montégnac was Montégnac, neither great lords, nor stewards, nor keepers, nor rich, nor poor, though the plain lay there before their eyes with nothing growing on it for want of water, not one of them ever thought of asking what became of the water in the Gabou. The stagnant water gives them the fever in three communes, but they never

thought of looking for the remedy; and I myself never dreamed of it; it took a man of God to see that——”

Farrabesche's eyes filled with tears as he spoke.

“The discoveries of men of genius are all so simple, that everyone thinks he could have found them out,” said Mme. Graslin; and to herself she added, “But there is this grand thing about genius, that while it is akin to all others, no one resembles it.”

“At once I saw what M. Bonnet meant,” Farrabesche went on. “He had not to use a lot of long words to explain my job to me. To make the thing all the queerer, madame, all the ridge above your plain (for it all belongs to you) is full of pretty deep cracks, ravines, and gullies, and what not; but all the water that flows down all the valleys, clefts, ravines, and gorges, every channel, in fact, empties itself into a little valley a few feet lower than the level of your plain, madame. I know the cause of this state of things to-day, and here it is: There is a sort of embankment of rock (*schist*, M. Bonnet calls it) twenty to thirty feet thick, which runs in an unbroken line all round the bases of the hills between Montégnac and the Living Rock. The earth, being softer than the stone, has been worn away and been hollowed out; so, naturally, the water all flows round into the Gabou, eating its passage out of each valley. The trees and thickets and brushwood hide the lie of the land; but when you follow the streams and track their passage, it is easy to convince yourself of the facts. In this way both hillsides drain into the Gabou, all the water from this side that we see, and the other over the ridge where your park lies, as well as from the rocks opposite. M. le Curé thinks that this state of things would work its own cure when the water-courses on your side of the ridge are blocked up at the mouth by the rocks and soil washed down from above, so that they raise barriers between themselves and the Gabou. When that time comes your plain will be flooded in turn like the common land you are just about to see; but it would take hundreds of years to bring that about. And besides, is it a thing to wish for, madame? Suppose that your plain of Montégnac should not suck up all that water, like the common

land here, there would be some more standing pools there to poison the whole country."

"So the places M. le Curé pointed out to me a few days ago, where the trees are still green, must mark the natural channels through which the water flows down into the Gabou?"

"Yes, madame. There are three hills between the Living Rock and Montégnac, and consequently there are three water-courses, and the streams that flow down them, banked in by the schist barrier, turn to the Gabou. That belt of wood still green, round the base of the hills, looks as if it were part of your plain, but it marks the course of the channel which was there, as M. le Curé guessed it would be."

"The misfortune will soon turn to a blessing for Montégnac," said Mme. Graslin, with deep conviction in her tones. "And since you have been the first instrument, you shall share in the work; you shall find active and willing workers, for hard work and perseverance must make up for the money which we lack."

Mme. Graslin had scarcely finished the sentence when Benjamin and Maurice came up; she caught at her horse's bridle, and, by a gesture, bade Farrabesche mount Maurice's horse.

"Now bring me to the place where the water drowns the common land," she said.

"It will be so much the better that you should go, madame, since that the late M. Graslin, acting on M. Bonnet's advice, bought about three hundred acres of land at the mouth of the gully where the mud has been deposited by the torrent, so that over a certain area there is some depth of rich soil. Madame will see the other side of the Living Rock; there is some magnificent timber there, and doubtless M. Graslin would have had a farm on the spot. The best situation would be a place where the little stream that rises near my house sinks into the ground again; it might be turned to advantage."

Farrabesche led the way, and Véronique followed down a steep path towards a spot where the two sides of the gully drew in, and then separated sharply to east and west, as if

divided by some earthquake shock. The gully was about sixty feet across. Tall grasses were growing among the huge boulders in the bottom. On the one side the Living Rock, cut to the quick, stood up a solid surface of granite without the slightest flaw in it; but the height of the uncompromising rock wall was crowned with the overhanging roots of trees, for the pines clutched the soil with their branching roots, seeming to grasp the granite as a bird clings to a bough; but on the other side the rock was yellow and sandy, and hollowed out by the weather; there was no depth in the caverns, no boldness in the hollows of the soft crumbling ocher-tinted rock. A few prickly-leaved plants, burdocks, reeds, and water plants at its base were sufficient signs of a north aspect and poor soil. Evidently the two ranges, though parallel, and as it were blended at the time of the great cataclysm which changed the surface of the globe, were composed of entirely different materials—an inexplicable freak of nature, or the result of some unknown cause which waits for genius to discover it. In this place the contrast between them was most strikingly apparent.

Véronique saw in front of her a vast dry plateau. There was no sign of plant life anywhere; the chalky soil explained the infiltration of the water, only a few stagnant pools remained here and there where the surface was incrustated. To the right stretched the mountains of the Corrèze, and to the left the eye was arrested by the huge mass of the Living Rock, the tall forest trees that clothed its sides, and two hundred acres of grass below the forest, in strong contrast with the ghastly solitude about them.

"My son and I made the ditch that you see down yonder," said Farrabesche; "you can see it by the line of tall grass; it will be connected shortly with the ditch that marks the edge of your forest. Your property is bounded on this side by a desert, for the first village lies a league away."

Véronique galloped into the hideous plain, and her keeper followed. She cleared the ditch and rode at full speed across the dreary waste, seeming to take a kind of wild delight in the vast picture of desolation before her. Farrabesche was right. No skill, no human power could turn that soil to

account, the ground rang hollow beneath the horses' hoofs. This was a result of the porous nature of the tufa, but there were cracks and fissures no less through which the flood water sank out of sight, doubtless to feed some far-off springs.

"And yet there are souls like this!" Véronique exclaimed within herself as she reined in her horse, after a quarter of an hour's gallop.

She mused a while with the desert all about her; there was no living creature, no animal, no insect; birds never crossed the plateau. In the plain of Montégnac there were at any rate the flints, a little sandy or clayey soil, and crumbled rock to make a thin crust of earth a few inches deep as a beginning for cultivation; but here the ungrateful tufa, which had ceased to be earth, and had not become stone, wearied the eyes so cruelly that they were absolutely forced to turn for relief to the illimitable ether of space. Véronique looked along the boundary of her forests and at the meadow which her husband had added to the estate, then she went slowly back towards the mouth of the Gabou. She came suddenly upon Farrabesche, and found him looking into a hole, which might have suggested that someone of a speculative turn had been probing this unlikely spot, imagining that nature had hidden some treasure there.

"What is it?" asked Véronique, noticing the deep sadness of the expression on the manly face.

"Madame, I owe my life to this trench here, or, more properly, I owe to it a space for repentance and time to redeem my faults in the eyes of men——"

The effect of this explanation of life was to nail Mme. Graslin to the spot. She reined in her horse.

"I used to hide here, madame. The ground is so full of echoes, that if I laid my ear to the earth I could catch the sound of the horses of the gendarmerie or the tramp of soldiers (an unmistakable sound that!) more than a league away. Then I used to escape by way of the Gabou. I had a horse ready in a place there, and I always put five or six leagues between myself and them that were after me. Catherine used to bring me food of a night. If she did not

find any sign of me, I always found bread and wine left in a hole covered over by a stone."

These recollections of his wild vagrant life, possibly unwholesome recollections for Farrabesche, stirred Véronique's most indulgent pity, but she rode rapidly on towards the Gabou, followed by the keeper. While she scanned the gap, looking down the long valley, so fertile on one side, so forlorn on the other, and saw, more than a league away, the hillside ridges, tier on tier, at the back of Montégnac, Farrabesche said, "There will be famous waterfalls here in a few days."

"And by the same day next year, not a drop of water will ever pass that way again. I am on my own property on either side, so I shall build a wall solid enough and high enough to keep the water in. Instead of a valley which is doing nothing, I shall have a lake, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty feet deep, and about a league across—a vast reservoir for the irrigation channels that shall fertilize the whole plain of Montégnac."

"M. le Curé was right, madame, when he told us, as we were finishing your road, that we were working for our mother; may God give His blessing to such an enterprise."

"Say nothing about it, Farrabesche," said Mme. Graslin; "it is M. Bonnet's idea."

Véronique returned to Farrabesche's cottage, found Maurice, and went back at once to the château. Her mother and Aline were surprised at the change in her face; the hope of doing good to the country had given it a look of something like happiness. Mme. Graslin wrote to M. Grossetête; she wanted him to ask M. de Granville for complete liberty for the poor convict, giving particulars as to his good conduct, which was further vouched for by the mayor's certificate and a letter from M. Bonnet. She also sent other particulars concerning Catherine Curieux, and entreated Grossetête to interest the public prosecutor in her kindly project, and to cause a letter to be written to the prefecture of police in Paris with a view to discovering the girl. The mere fact that Catherine had remitted sums of money to the convict in prison should be a sufficient clew by which to trace her. Véronique had set her heart on knowing the

reason why Catherine had failed to come back to her child and to Farrabesche. Then she told her old friend of her discoveries in the torrent-bed of the Gabou, and laid stress on the necessity of finding the clever man for whom she had already asked him.

The next day was Sunday. For the first time since Véronique took up her abode in Montégnac, she felt able to go to church for Mass. She went and took possession of her pew in the Lady Chapel. Looking round her, she saw how bare the poverty-stricken church was, and determined to set by a certain sum every year for repairs and the decoration of the altars. She heard the words of the priest, tender, gracious, and divine; for the sermon, couched in such simple language that all present could understand it, was in truth sublime. The sublime comes from the heart; it is not to be found by effort of the intellect; and religion is an inexhaustible source of sublime thoughts with no false glitter of brilliance, for the catholicism which penetrates and changes hearts is wholly of the heart. M. Bonnet found in the epistle a text for his sermon, to the effect that soon or late God fulfills His promises, watches over His own, and encourages the good. He made it clear that great things would be the result of the presence of a rich and charitable resident in the parish, by pointing out that the duties of the poor towards the beneficent rich were as extensive as those of the rich towards the poor, and that the relation should be one of mutual help.

Farrabesche had spoken to some of those who were glad to see him (one consequence of the spirit of Christian charity which M. Bonnet had infused into practical action in his parish), and had told them of Mme. Graslin's kindness to him. All the commune had talked this over in the square below the church, where, according to country custom, they gathered together before Mass. Nothing could more completely have won the good will of these folk, who are so readily touched by any kindness shown to them; and when Véronique came out of church, she found almost all the parish standing in a double row. All hats went off respectfully and in deep silence as she passed. This welcome touched



her, though she did not know the real reason of it. Among the last of all she saw Farrabesche, and spoke to him.

"You are a good sportsman; do not forget to send us some game."

A few days after this Véronique walked with the curé in that part of the forest nearest her château; she determined to descend the ridges which she had seen from the Living Rock, ranged tier on tier on the other side of the hill. With the curé's assistance, she would ascertain the exact position of the higher affluents of the Gabou. The result was the discovery by the curé of the fact that the streams which water Upper Montégnac really rose in the mountains of the Corrèze. These ranges were united to the mountain by the arid rib of hill which ran parallel to the chain of the Living Rock. The curé came back from that walk with boyish glee; he saw, with the naïveté of a poet, the prosperity of the village that he loved. And what is a poet but a man who realizes his dreams before the time? M. Bonnet reaped his harvests as he looked down from the terrace at the barren plain.

Farrabesche and his son came up to the château next morning loaded with game. The keeper had brought a cup for Francis Graslin; it was nothing less than a masterpiece—a battle scene carved on a cocoanut shell. Mme. Graslin happened to be walking on the terrace, on the side that overlooked "Tascherons'." She sat down on a garden seat, and looked long at that fairy's work. Tears came into her eyes from time to time.

"You must have been very unhappy," she said, addressing Farrabesche after a silence.

"What could I do, madame?" he answered. "I was there without the hope of escape, which makes life bearable to almost all the convicts——"

"It is an appalling life!" she said, and her look and compassionate tones invited Farrabesche to speak.

In Mme. Graslin's convulsive tremor and evident emotion Farrabesche saw nothing but the overwrought interest excited by pitying curiosity. Just at that moment Mme. Sauviat appeared in one of the garden walks, and seemed

about to join them, but Véronique drew out her handkerchief and motioned her away. "Let me be, mother," she cried, in sharper tones than she had ever before used to the old Auvergnate.

"For five years I wore a chain riveted here to a heavy iron ring, madame," Harrabesche said, pointing to his leg. "I was fastened to another man. I have had to live like that with three convicts first and last. I used to lie on a wooden camp bedstead, and I had to work uncommonly hard to get a thin mattress, called a *serpenin*. There were eight hundred men in each ward. Each of the beds (*tolards*, they called them) held twenty-four men, all chained together two and two, and nights and mornings they passed a long chain called the 'bilboes string,' in and out of the chains that bound each couple together, and made it fast to the *tolard*, so that all of us were fastened down by the feet. Even after a couple of years of it, I could not get used to the clank of those chains; every moment they said, 'You are in a convicts' prison!' If you dropped off to sleep for a minute, some rogue or other would begin to wrangle or turn himself round, and put you in mind of your plight. You had to serve an apprenticeship to learn how to sleep. I could not sleep at all, in fact, unless I was utterly exhausted with a heavy day's work.

"After I managed to sleep, I had, at any rate, the night when I could forget things. Forgetfulness—that is something, madame! Once a man is there, he must learn to satisfy his needs after a manner fixed by the most pitiless rules. You can judge, madame, what sort of effect this life was like to have on me, a young fellow who had always lived in the woods, like the wild goats and the birds! Ah! if I had not eaten my bread cooped up in the four walls of a prison for six months beforehand, I should have thrown myself into the sea at the sight of my mates, for all the beautiful things M. Bonnet said, and (I may say it) he has been the father of my soul. I did pretty well in the open air; but when once I was shut up in the ward to sleep or eat (for we ate our food there out of troughs, three couples to each trough), it took all the life out of me; the dreadful faces

and the language of the others always sickened me. Luckily, at five o'clock in the summer, and half-past seven in winter, out we went in spite of heat or cold or wind or rain, in the 'jail gang'—that means to work. So we were out of doors most of our time, and the open air seems very good to you when you come out of a place where eight hundred convicts herded together. . . . The air, you must always remember, is sea air! You enjoy the breeze, the sun is like a friend, and you watch the clouds pass over, and look for hopeful signs of a beautiful day. For my own part, I took an interest in my work."

Farrabesche stopped, for two great tears rolled down Véronique's cheeks.

"Oh! madame, these are only the roses of that existence!" he cried, taking the expression on Mme. Graslin's face for pity of his lot. "There are the dreadful precautions the Government takes to make sure of us, the inquisition kept up by the warders, the inspection of fetters morning and evening, the coarse food, the hideous clothes that humiliate you at every moment, the constrained position while you sleep, the frightful sound of four hundred double chains clanking in an echoing ward, the prospect of being mowed down with grape-shot if half a dozen scoundrels take it into their heads to rebel,—all these horrible things are nothing, they are the roses of that life, as I said before. Any respectable man unlucky enough to be sent there must die of disgust before very long. You have to live day and night with another convict; you have to endure the company of five more at every meal, and twenty-three at night; you have to listen to their talk.

"The convicts have secret laws among themselves, madame; if you make an outlaw of yourself, they will murder you; if you submit, you become a murderer. You have your choice—you must be either victim or executioner. After all, if you die at a blow, that would put an end to you and your troubles; but they are too cunning in wickedness, it is impossible to hold out against their hatred: anyone whom they dislike is completely at their mercy, they can make every moment of his life one constant torture worse than

death. Any man who repents and tries to behave well is the common enemy, and more particularly they suspect him of tale-telling. They will take a man's life on a mere suspicion of tale-telling. Every ward has its tribunal, where they try crimes against the convicts' laws. It is an offense not to conform to their customs, and a man may be punished for that. For instance, everybody is bound to help the escape of a convict; every convict has his chance of escape in turn, when the whole prison is bound to give him help and protection. It is a crime to reveal anything done by a convict to further his escape. I will not speak of the horrible moral tone of the prison; strictly speaking, it has nothing to do with the subject. The prison authorities chain men of opposite dispositions together, so as to neutralize any attempt at escape or rebellion; and always put those who either could not endure each other, or were suspicious of each other, on the same chain."

"What did you do?" asked Mme. Graslin.

"Oh! it was like this, I had luck," said Farrabesche; "the lot never fell to me to kill a doomed man, I never voted the death of anybody, no matter whom, I was never punished, no one took a dislike to me, and I lived comfortably with the three mates they gave me one after another—all three of them feared and liked me. But then I was well known in the prison before I got there, madame. A *chauffeur*! for I was supposed to be one of those brigands . . . I have seen them do it," Farrabesche went on in a low voice, after a pause, "but I never would help to torture folk, nor take any of the stolen money. I was a 'refractory conscript,' that was all. I used to help the rest, I was scout for them, I fought, I was forlorn sentinel, rearguard, what you will, but I never shed blood except in self-defense. Oh! I told M. Bonnet and my lawyer everything, and the judges knew quite well that I was not a murderer. But, all the same, I am a great criminal; the things that I have done are all against the law.

"Two of my old comrades had told them about me before I came. I was a man of whom the greatest things might be expected, they said. In the convicts' prison, you see,

madame, there is nothing like a character of that kind; it is worth even more than money. A murder is a passport in this republic of wretchedness; they leave you in peace. I did nothing to destroy their opinion of me. I looked gloomy and resigned; it was possible to be misled by my face, and they were misled. My sullen manner and my silence were taken for signs of ferocity. Everyone there, convicts and warders, young and old, respected me. I was president of my ward. I was never tormented at night, nor suspected of tale-telling. I lived honestly according to their rules; I never refused to do anyone a good turn; I never showed a sign of disgust; in short, I 'howled with the wolves,' to all appearance, and in my secret soul I prayed to God. My last mate was a soldier, a lad of two-and-twenty, who had stolen something, and then deserted in consequence; I had him for four years. We were friends, and wherever I may be I can reckon on *him* when he comes out. The poor wretch, Guépin they called him, was not a rascal, he was only a hair-brained boy; his ten years will sober him down. Oh! if the rest had known that it was religion that reconciled me to my fate; that when my time was up I meant to live in some corner without letting them know where I was, to forget those fearful creatures, and never to be in the way of meeting one of them again, they would very likely have driven me mad."

"But, then, suppose that some unhappy, sensitive boy had been carried away by passion, and—pardoned so far as the death penalty is concerned——?"

"Madame, a murderer is never fully pardoned. They begin by commuting the sentence for twenty years of penal servitude. But for a decent young fellow it is a thing to shudder at! It is impossible to tell you about the life in store for him; it would be a hundred times better for him that he should die! Yes, for such a death on the scaffold is good fortune."

"I did not dare to think it," said Mme. Graslin.

Véronique had grown white as wax. She leant her forehead against the balustrade to hide her face for several moments. Farrabesche did not know whether he ought to

go or stay. Then Mme. Graslin rose to her feet, and with an almost queenly look she said, to Farrabesche's great astonishment, "Thank you, my friend!" in tones that went to his heart. Then after a pause—"Where did you draw courage to live and suffer as you did?" she asked.

"Ah, madame, M. Bornet had set a treasure in my soul! That is why I love him more than I have ever loved anyone else in this world."

"More than Catherine?" asked Mme. Graslin, with a certain bitterness in her smile.

"Ah, madame, almost as much."

"How did he do it?"

"Madame, the things that he said and the tones of his voice subdued me. It was Catherine who showed him the way to the hiding-place in the chalk-land which I showed you the other day. He came to me quite alone. He was the new curé of Montégnac, he told me; I was his parishioner, I was dear to him, he knew that I had only strayed from the path, that I was not yet lost; he did not mean to betray me, but to save me; in fact, he said things that thrill you to the very depths of your nature. And you see, madame, he can make you do right with all the force that other people take to make you do wrong. He told me, poor dear man, that Catherine was a mother; I was about to give over two creatures to shame and neglect. 'Very well,' said I, 'then they will be just as I am; I have no future before me.' He answered that I had two futures before me, and both of them bad—one in this world, the other in the next—unless I desisted and reformed. Here below I was bound to die on the scaffold. If I were caught, my defense would break down in a court of law. On the other hand, if I took advantage of the mildness of the new Government towards 'refractory conscripts' of many years' standing, and gave myself up, he would strain every nerve to save my life. He would find me a clever advocate who would pull me through with ten years' penal servitude. After that M. Bonnet talked to me of another life. Catherine cried like a Magdalen at that. There, madame," said Farrabesche, holding out his right hand, "she laid her face against *this*, and I felt

it quite wet with her tears. She prayed me to live! M. le Curé promised to contrive a quiet and happy lot for me and for my child, even in this district, and undertook that no one should cast up the past to me. In short, he lectured me as if I had been a little boy. After three of those nightly visits I was as pliant as a glove. Do you care to know why, madame? ”

Farrabesche and Mme. Graslin looked at each other, and neither of them to their secret souls explained the real motive of their mutual curiosity.

“Very well,” the poor ticket-of-leave man continued, “the first time when he had gone away, and Catherine went, too, to show him the way back, and I was left alone, I felt a kind of freshness and calm and happiness such as I had not known since I was a child. It was something like the happiness I had felt with poor Catherine. The love of this dear man, who had come to seek me out, the interest that he took in me, in my future, in my soul—it all worked upon me and changed me. It was as if a light arose in me. So long as he was with me and talked, I held out. How could I help it? He was a priest, and we bandits do not eat their bread. But when the sound of his footsteps and Catherine’s died away—oh! I was, as he said two days later, ‘enlightened by grace.’

“From that time forwards, God gave me strength to endure everything—the jail, the sentence, the putting on of the irons, the journey, the life in the convicts’ prison. I reckoned upon M. Bonnet’s promise as upon the truth of the Gospel; I looked on my sufferings as a payment of arrears. Whenever things grew unbearable, I used to see, at the end of the ten years, this house in the woods, and my little Benjamin and Catherine there. Good M. Bonnet, he kept his promise; but someone else failed me. Catherine was not at the prison door when I came out, nor yet at the trysting place on the common lands. She must have died of grief. That is why I am always sad. Now, thanks to you, madame, I shall have work to do that needs doing; I shall put myself into it body and soul, so will my boy for whom I live——”

"You have shown me how it was that M. le Curé could bring about the changes in his parish——"

"Oh! nothing can resist him," said Farrabesche.

"No, no. I know that," Véronique answered briefly, and she dismissed Farrabesche with a sign of farewell.

Farrabesche went. Most of that day Véronique spent in pacing to and fro along the terrace, in spite of the drizzling rain that fell till evening came on. She was gloomy and sad. When Véronique's brows were thus contracted, neither her mother nor Aline dared to break in on her mood; she did not see her mother talking in the dusk with M. Bonnet, who, seeing that she must be roused from this appalling dejection, sent the child to find her. Little Francis went up to his mother and took her hand, and Véronique suffered herself to be led away. At the sight of M. Bonnet she started with something almost like dismay. The curé led the way back to the terrace.

"Well, madame," he said, "what can you have been talking about with Farrabesche?"

Véronique did not wish to lie nor to answer the question; she replied to it by another—

"Was he your first victory?"

"Yes," said M. Bonnet. "If I could win him, I felt sure of Montégnac, and so it proved."

Véronique pressed M. Bonnet's hand.

"From to-day I am your penitent, M. le Curé," she said, with tears in her voice; "to-morrow I will make you a general confession."

The last words plainly spoke of a great inward struggle and a hardly won victory over herself. The curé led the way back to the château without a word, and stayed with her till dinner, talking over the vast improvements to be made in Montégnac.

"Agriculture is a question of time," he said. "The little that I know about it has made me to understand how much may be done by a well-spent winter. Here are the rains beginning, you see; before long the mountains will be covered with snow, and your operations will be impossible; so hurry M. Grossetête."



M. Bonnet exerted himself to talk, and drew Mme. Graslin into the conversation; gradually her thoughts were forced to take another turn, and by the time he left her she had almost recovered from the day's excitement. But even so, Mme. Sauviat saw that her daughter was so terribly agitated that she spent the night with her.

Two days later a messenger sent by M. Grossetête arrived with the following letters for Mme. Graslin:

*Grossetête to Mme. Graslin.*

"MY DEAR CHILD,—Horses are not easily to be found, but I hope that you are satisfied with the three which I sent you. If you need draught-horses or plow-horses, they must be looked for elsewhere. It is better in any case to use oxen for plowing and as draught animals. In all districts where they use horses on the land, they lose their capital as soon as the animal is past work, while an ox, instead of being a loss, yields a profit to the farmer.

"I approve your enterprise in every respect, my child; you will find in it an outlet for the devouring mental energy which was turned against yourself and wearing you out. But when you ask me to find you, over and above the horses, a man able to second you, and more particularly to enter into your views, you ask me for one of those rare birds that we rear, it is true, in the provinces, but which we in no case keep among us. The training of the noble animal is too lengthy and too risky a speculation for us to undertake, and besides, we are afraid of these very clever folk—'eccentrics,' we call them.

"As a matter of fact, too, the men who are classed in the scientific category in which you are fain to find a co-operator are, as a rule, so prudent and so well provided for, that I hardly liked to write to tell you how impossible it would be to come by such a prize. You asked me for a poet, or, if you prefer it, a madman; but all our madmen betake themselves to Paris. I did speak to one or two young fellows engaged on the land survey and assessments, contractors for embankments, or foremen employed on canal

cuttings; but none of them thought it worth their while to entertain your proposals. Chance all at once threw in my way the very man you want, a young man whom I thought to help; for you will see by his letter that one ought not to set about doing a kindness in a happy-go-lucky fashion, and, indeed, an act of kindness requires more thinking about than anything else on this earth. You can never tell whether what seemed to you to be right at the time may not do harm by and by. By helping others we shape our own destinies; I see that now——”

As Mme. Graslin read those words, the letter dropped from her hands. For some moments she sat deep in thought.

“Oh, God,” she cried, “when wilt Thou cease to smite me by every man’s hand?”

Then she picked up the letters and read on—

“Gérard seems to me to have plenty of enthusiasm and a cool head; the very man for you! Paris is in a ferment just now with this leaven of new doctrine, and I shall be delighted if the young fellow keeps out of the snares spread by ambitious spirits, who work upon the instincts of the generous youth of France. The rather torpid existence of the provinces is not altogether what I like for him, but neither do I like the idea of the excitement of the life in Paris, and the enthusiasm for renovating, which urges youngsters into the new ways. You, and you only, know my opinions; to me it seems that the world of ideas revolves on its axis much as the material world does. Here is this poor protégé of mine wanting impossibilities. No power on earth could stand before ambitions so violent, imperious, and absolute. I have a liking myself for a jog trot; I like to go slowly in politics, and have but very little taste for the social topsy-turvydom which all these lofty spirits are minded to inflict upon us. To you I confide the principles of an old and trusted supporter of the monarchy, for you are discreet. I hold my tongue here among these good folk, who believe more and more in progress the further they get

into a mess; but for all that, it hurts me to see the irreparable damage done already to our dear country.

“So I wrote and told the young man that a task worthy of him was waiting for him here. He is coming to see you; for though his letter (which I inclose) will give you a very fair idea of him, you would like to see him as well, would you not? You women can tell so much from the look of people; and besides, you ought not to have anyone, however insignificant, in your service unless you like him. If he is not the man you want, you can decline his services; but if he suits you, dear child, cure him of his flimsily disguised ambitions, induce him to adopt the happy and peaceful life of the fields, a life in which beneficence is perpetual, where all the qualities of great and strong natures are continually brought into play, where the products of Nature are a daily source of new wonder, and a man finds worthy occupation in making a real advance and practical improvements. I do not in any way overlook the fact that great deeds come of great ideas—great theories; but as ideas of that kind are seldom met with, I think that, for the most part, practical attainments are worth more than ideas. A man who brings a bit of land into cultivation, or a tree or fruit to perfection, who makes grass grow where grass would not grow before, ranks a good deal higher than the seeker after formulas for humanity. In what has Newton’s science changed the lot of the worker in the fields? . . . Ah! my dear, I loved you before, but to-day, appreciating to the full the task which you have set before you, I love you far more. You are not forgotten here in Limoges, and everyone admires your great resolution of improving Montégnaç. Give us our little due, in that we have the wit to admire nobility when we see it, and do not forget that the first of your admirers is also your earliest friend.

“F. GROSSETÊTE.”

*Gérard to Grossetête.*

“I come to you, monsieur, with sad confidences, but you have been like a father to me, when you might have been

simply a patron. So to you alone who have made me anything that I am, can I make them. I have fallen a victim to a cruel disease, a disease, moreover, not of the body; I am conscious that I am completely unfitted by my thoughts, feelings, and opinions, and by the whole bent of my mind, to do what is expected of me by the Government and by society. Perhaps this will seem to you to be a piece of ingratitude, but it is simply and solely an indictment that I address to you.

“When I was twelve years old you saw the signs of a certain aptitude for the exact sciences, and a precocious ambition to succeed, in a workingman’s son, and it was through you, my generous godfather, that I took my flight towards higher spheres; but for you I should be following out my original destiny, I should be a carpenter like my poor father, who did not live to rejoice in my success. And most surely, monsieur, you did me a kindness; there is no day on which I do not bless you; and so, perhaps, it is I who am in the wrong. But whether right or wrong, I am unhappy; and does not the fact that I pour out my complaints to you set you very high? Is it not as if I made of you a supreme judge, like God? In any case, I trust to your indulgence.

“I studied the exact sciences so hard between the ages of sixteen and eighteen that I made myself ill, as you know. My whole future depended on my admission to the *École Polytechnique*. The work I did at that time was a disproportionate training for the intellect; I all but killed myself; I studied day and night; I exerted myself to do more than I was perhaps fit for. I was determined to pass my examinations so well that I should be sure not only of admittance into the *École*, but of a free education there, for I wanted to spare you the expense, and I succeeded!

“It makes me shudder now to think of that appalling conscription of brains yearly made over to the Government by family ambition; a conscription which demands such severe study at a time when a lad is almost a man, and growing fast in every way, cannot but do incalculable mischief; many precious faculties which later would have developed

and grown strong and powerful, are extinguished by the light of the student's lamp. Nature's laws are inexorable; they are not to be thrust aside by the schemes nor at the pleasure of society; and the laws of the physical world, the laws which govern the nature without, hold good no less of human nature—every abuse must be paid for. If you must have fruit out of season, you have it from a forcing house either at the expense of the tree or of the quality of the fruit. La Quintinie killed the orange trees that Louis XIV. might have a bouquet of orange blossoms every morning throughout the year. Any heavy demand made on a still growing intellect is a draft on its future.

“The pressing and special need of our age is the spirit of the lawgiver. Europe has so far seen no lawgiver since Jesus Christ; and Christ, who gave us no vestige of a political code, left His work incomplete. For example, before technical schools were established, and the present means of filling them with scholars was adopted, did they call in one of the great thinkers who hold in their heads the immensity of the sum of the relations of the institution to human brain power; who can balance the advantages and disadvantages, and study in the past the laws of the future? Was any inquiry made into the after-lives of men who, for their misfortune, knew the circle of the sciences at too early an age? Was any estimate of their rarity attempted! Was their fate ascertained? Was it discovered how they contrived to endure the continual strain of thought? How many of them died like Pascal, prematurely, worn out by science? Some, again, lived to old age; when did these begin their studies? Was it known then, is it known now as I write, what conformation of the brain is best fitted to stand the strain, and to cope prematurely with knowledge? Is it so much as suspected that this is before all things a physiological question?

“Well, I think myself that the general rule is that the vegetative period of adolescence should be prolonged. There are exceptions; there are some so constituted that they are capable of this effort in youth, but the result is the shortening of life in most cases. Clearly the man of genius who

can stand the precocious exercise of his faculties is bound to be an exception among exceptions. If medical testimony and social data bear me out, our way of recruiting for the technical schools in France works as much havoc among the best human specimens of each generation as La Quintinie's process among the orange trees.

"But to continue (for I will append my doubts to each series of facts), I began my work anew at the École, and with more enthusiasm than ever. I meant to leave it as successfully as I had entered it. Between the ages of nineteen and one-and-twenty I worked with all my might, and developed faculties by their constant exercise. Those two years set the crown on the three which came before them, when I was only preparing to do great things. And then, what pride did I not feel when I had won the privilege of choosing the career most to my mind? I might be a military or marine engineer, might go on the staff of the Artillery, into the Mines department, or the Roads and Bridges. . I took your advice, and became a civil engineer.

"Yet where I triumphed, how many fell out of the ranks! You know that from year to year the Government raises the standard of the École. The work grows harder and more trying from time to time. The course of preparatory study through which I went was nothing compared with the work at fever-heat in the École, to the end that every physical science—mathematics, astronomy, and chemistry, and the terminologies of each—may be packed into the heads of so many young men between the ages of nineteen and twenty-one. The Government here in France, which in so many ways seems to aim at taking the place of the paternal authority, has in this respect no bowels—no father's pity for its children; it makes its experiments *in anima vili*. The ugly statistics of the mischief it has wrought have never been asked for; no one has troubled to inquire how many cases of brain fever there have been during the last thirty-six years; how many explosions of despair among those young lads; no one takes account of the moral destruction which decimates the victims. I lay stress on this painful aspect of the problem, because it occurs by the way, and before the

final result; for a few weaklings the result comes soon instead of late. You know, besides, that these victims, whose minds work slowly, or who, it may be, are temporarily stupefied with overwork, are allowed to stay for three years instead of two at the *École*, but the way these are regarded there has no very favorable influence on their capacity. In fact, it may chance that young men, who at a later day will show that they have something in them, may leave the *École* without an appointment at all, because at the final examination they do not exhibit the amount of knowledge required of them. These are 'plucked,' as they say, and Napoleon used to make sub-lieutenants of them. In these days the 'plucked' candidate represents a vast loss of capital invested by families, and a loss of time for the lad himself.

"But, after all, I myself succeeded! At the age of one-and-twenty I had gone over all the ground discovered in mathematics by men of genius, and I was impatient to distinguish myself by going further. The desire is so natural that almost every student when he leaves the *École* fixes his eyes on the sun called glory in an invisible heaven. The first thought in all our minds was to be a Newton, a Laplace, or a Vauban. Such are the efforts which France requires of young men who leave the famous *École Polytechnique*!

"And now let us see what becomes of the men sorted and sifted with such care out of a whole generation. At one-and-twenty we dream dreams, a whole lifetime lies before us, we expect wonders. I entered the School of Roads and Bridges, and became a civil engineer. I studied construction, and with what enthusiasm! You must remember it. In 1826, when I left the School, at the age of twenty-four, I was still only a civil engineer on my promotion, with a Government grant of a hundred and fifty francs a month. The worst paid bookkeeper in Paris will earn as much by the time he is eighteen, and with four hours' work in the day. By unhopèd-for good luck, it may be because my studies had brought me distinction, I received an appointment as a surveyor in 1828. I was twenty-six years old. They sent me, you know where, into a sub-prefecture with a salary

of two thousand five hundred francs. The money matters nothing. My lot is at any rate more brilliant than a carpenter's son has a right to expect; but what journeyman grocer put into a shop at the age of sixteen will not be fairly on the way to an independence by the time he is six-and-twenty?

"Then I found out the end to which these terrible displays of intelligence were directed, and why the gigantic efforts, required of us by the Government, were made. The Government set me to count paving stones and measure the heaps of road metal by the waysides. I must repair, keep in order, and occasionally construct runnels and culverts, maintain the ways, clean out, and occasionally open ditches. At the office I must answer all questions relating to the alignment or the planting and felling of trees. These are, in fact, the principal and often the only occupations of an ordinary surveyor. Perhaps from time to time there is some bit of leveling to be done, and that we are obliged to do ourselves, though any of the foremen with his practical experience could do the work a good deal better than we can with all our science.

"There are nearly four hundred of us altogether—ordinary surveyors and assistants—and as there are only some hundred odd engineers-in-chief, all the subordinates cannot hope for promotion; there is practically no higher rank to absorb the engineers-in-chief, for twelve or fifteen inspectors-general or divisionaries scarcely count, and their posts are almost as much of sinecures in our corps as colonelcies in the artillery when the battery is united with it. An ordinary civil engineer, like a captain of artillery, knows all that is known about his work; he ought not to need anyone to look after him except an administrative head to connect the eighty-six engineers with each other and the Government, for a single engineer with two assistants is quite enough for a department. A hierarchy in such a body as ours works in this way. Energetic minds are subordinated to old effete intelligences, who think themselves bound to distort and alter (they think for the better) the drafts submitted to them; perhaps they do this simply to give some reason for their



existence; and this, it seems to me, is the only influence exerted on public works in France by the General Council of Roads and Bridges.

“Let us suppose, however, that between the ages of thirty and forty I become an engineer of the first-class, and am an engineer-in-chief by the time I am fifty. Alas! I foresee my future; it lies before my eyes. My engineer-in-chief is a man of sixty. He left the famous *École* with distinction, as I did; he has grown gray in two departments over such work as I am doing; he has become the most commonplace man imaginable, has fallen from the heights of attainment he once reached; nay, more than that, he is not even abreast of science. Science has made progress, and he has remained stationary; worse still, has forgotten what he once knew! The man who came to the front at the age of twenty-two with every sign of real ability has nothing of it left now but the appearance. At the very outset of his career his education was especially directed to mathematics and the exact sciences, and he took no interest in anything that was not ‘in his line.’ You would scarcely believe it, but the man knows absolutely nothing of other branches of learning. Mathematics have dried up his heart and brain. I cannot tell anyone but you what a nullity he really is, screened by the name of the *École Polytechnique*. The label is impressive; and people, being prejudiced in his favor, do not dare to throw any doubt on his ability. But to you I may say that his befogged intellects have cost the department in one affair a million francs, where two hundred thousand should have been ample. I was for protecting, for opening the prefect’s eyes, and what not; but a friend of mine, another surveyor, told me about a man in the corps who became a kind of black sheep in the eyes of administration by doing something of this sort. ‘Would you yourself be very much pleased, when you are engineer-in-chief, to have your mistakes shown up by a subordinate?’ asked he. ‘Your engineer-in-chief will be a divisionary inspector before very long. As soon as one of us makes some egregious blunder, the Administration (which, of course, must never be in the wrong) withdraws the perpetrator from active service and makes him an in-

spector.' That is how the reward due to a capable man becomes a sort of premium on stupidity.

"All France saw one disaster in the heart of Paris, the miserable collapse of the first suspension bridge which an engineer (a member of the Académie des Sciences, moreover) endeavored to construct, a collapse caused by blunders which would not have been made by the constructor of the Canal de Briare in the time of Henri IV., nor by the monk who built the Pont Royal. Him too the Administration consoled by a summons to the Board of the General Council.

"Are the technical schools really manufactories of incompetence? The problem requires prolonged observation. If there is anything in what I say, a reform is needed, at any rate in the way in which they are carried on, for I do not venture to question the usefulness of the Écoles. Still, looking back over the past, does it appear that France has ever lacked men of great ability at need, or the talent she tries to hatch as required in these days by Monge's method? What school turned out Vauban save the great school called 'vocation'? Who was Riquet's master? When genius has raised itself above the social level, urged upwards by a vocation, it is almost always fully equipped; and in that case your man is no 'specialist,' but has something universal in his gift. I do not believe that any engineer who ever left the École could build one of the miracles of architecture which Leonardo da Vinci reared; Leonardo at once mechanician, architect, and painter, one of the inventors of hydraulic science, the indefatigable constructor of canals. They are so accustomed while yet in their teens to the bald simplicity of geometry, that by the time they leave the École they have quite lost all feeling for grace or ornament; a column to their eyes is a useless waste of material; they return to the point where art begins—on utility they take their stand, and stay there.

"But this is as nothing compared with the disease which is consuming me. I feel that a most terrible change is being wrought in me; I feel that my energy and faculties, after the exorbitant strain put upon them, are dwindling and growing feeble. The influence of my humdrum life is creeping

over me. After such efforts as mine, I feel that I am destined to do great things, and I am confronted by the most trivial taskwork, such as verifying yards of road metal, inspecting highways, checking inventories of stores. I have not enough to do to fill two hours in the day.

“I watch my colleagues marry and fall out of touch with modern thought. Is my ambition really immoderate? I should like to serve my country. My country required me to give proof of no ordinary powers, and bade me become an encyclopedia of the sciences—and here I am, folding my arms in an obscure corner of a province. I am not allowed to leave the place where I am penned up, to exercise my wits by trying new and useful experiments elsewhere. A vague indefinable grudge is the certain reward awaiting any one of us who follows his own inspirations, and does more than the department requires of him. The most that such a man ought to hope for is that his overweening presumption may be passed over, his talent neglected, while his project receives decent burial in the pigeon-holes at headquarters. What will Vicat’s reward be, I wonder? (Between ourselves, Vicat is the only man among us who has made any real advance in the science of construction.)

“The General Council of Roads and Bridges is partly made up of men worn out by long and sometimes honorable service, but whose remaining brain power only exerts itself negatively; these gentlemen erase anything that they cannot understand at their age, and act as a sort of extinguisher to be put when required on audacious innovations. The Council might have been created for the express purpose of paralyzing the arm of the generous younger generation, which only asks for leave to work, and would fain serve France.

“Monstrous things happen in Paris. The future of a province depends on the *visa* of these bureaucrats. I have not time to tell you all about the intrigues which balk the best schemes; for them the best schemes are, as a matter of fact, those which open up the best prospects of money-making to the greed of speculators and companies, which knock most abuses on the head, for abuses are always stronger than the spirit of improvement in France. In five years’

time my old self-will no longer exists. I shall see my ambitions die out in me, and my noble desire to use the faculties which my country bade me display, and then left to rust in my obscure corner.

“Taking the most favorable view possible, my outlook seems to me to be very poor. I took advantage of leave of absence to come to Paris. I want to change my career, to find scope for my energies, knowledge, and activity. I shall send in my resignation, and go to some country where men with my special training are needed, where great things may be done. If none of all this is possible, I will throw in my lot with some of these new doctrines which seem as if they must make some great change in the present order of things, by directing the workers to better purpose. For what are we but laborers without work, tools lying idle in the warehouse? We are organized as if it was a question of shaking the globe, and we are required to do—nothing.

“I am conscious that there is something great in me which is pining away and will perish; I tell you this with mathematical explicitness. But I should like to have your advice before I make a change in my condition. I look on myself as your son, and should never take any important step without consulting you, for your experience is as great as your goodness. I know, of course, that when the Government has obtained its specially trained men, it can no more set its engineers to construct public monuments than it can declare war to give the army an opportunity of winning great battles and of finding out which are its great captains. But, then, as the man has never failed to appear when circumstances called for him; as, at the moment when there is much money to be spent and great things to be done, one of these unique men of genius springs up from the crowd; and as, particularly in matters of this kind, one Vauban is enough at a time, nothing could better demonstrate the utter uselessness of the institution. In conclusion, when a picked man’s mental energies have been stimulated by all this preparation, how can the Government help seeing that he will make any amount of struggle before he allows himself to be effaced?

Is it wise policy? What is it but a way of kindling burning ambition? Would they bid all those perfervid heads learn to calculate anything and everything but the probabilities of their own futures?

“There are, no doubt, exceptions among some six hundred young men, some firm and unbending characters, who decline to be withdrawn in this way from circulation. I know some of them; but if the story of their struggles with men and things could be told in full; if it were known how that, while full of useful projects and ideas which would put life and wealth into stagnant country districts, they meet with hindrances put in their way by the very men who (so the Government led them to believe) would give them help and countenance, the strong man, the man of talent, the man whose nature is a miracle, would be thought a hundred times more unfortunate and more to be pitied than the man whose degenerate nature tamely resigns himself to the atrophy of his faculties.

“So I would prefer to direct some private commercial or industrial enterprise, and live on very little, while trying to find a solution of some one of the many unsolved problems of industry and modern life, rather than remain where I am. You will say that there is nothing to prevent me from employing my powers as it is; that in the silence of this humdrum life I might set myself to find the solution of one of those problems which presses on humanity. Ah! monsieur, do you not understand what the influence of the provinces is; the enervating effect of a life just sufficiently busy to fill the days with all but futile work, but yet not full enough to give occupation to the powers so fully developed by such a training as ours? You will not think, my dear guardian, that I am eaten up with the ambition of money-making, or consumed with a mad desire for fame. I have not learned to calculate to so little purpose that I cannot measure the emptiness of fame. The inevitable activity of the life has led me not to think of marriage; and looking at my present prospects, I have not so good an opinion of existence as to give such a sorry present to another self. Although I look upon money as one of the most powerful instruments that

can be put in the hands of a civilized man, money is, after all, only a means. My sole pleasure lies in the assurance that I am serving my country. To have employment for my faculties in a congenial atmosphere would be the height of enjoyment for me. Perhaps among your acquaintance in your part of the world, in the circle on which you shine, you might hear of something which requires some of the aptitude which you know that I possess, I will wait six months for an answer from you.

“These things which I am writing to you, dear patron and friend, others are thinking. I have seen a good many of my colleagues or old scholars at the École, caught, as I was, in the snare of a special training; ordnance surveyors, captain-professors, captains in the Artillery, doomed (as they see) to be captains for the rest of their days, bitterly regretting that they did not go into the regular army. Again and again, in fact, we have admitted to each other in confidence that we are victims of a long mystification, which we only discover when it is too late to draw back, when the mill-horse is used to the round, and the sick man accustomed to his disease.

“After looking carefully into these melancholy results, I have asked myself the following questions, which I send to you, as a man of sense, whose mature wisdom will see all that lies in them, knowing that they are fruit of thought refined by the fires of painful experience.

“What end has the Government in view? To obtain the best abilities? If so, the Government sets to work to obtain a directly opposite result: if it had hated talent, it could not have had better success in producing respectable mediocrities.—Or does it intend to open out a career to selected intelligence? It could not well have given it a more mediocre position. There is not a man sent out by the Écoles who does not regret between fifty and sixty that he fell into the snare concealed by the offers of the Government.—Does it mean to secure men of genius? What really great man have the Écoles turned out since 1790? Would Cachin, the genius to whom we owe Cherbourg, have existed but for Napoleon? It was Imperial despotism which singled

him out; the Constitutional Administration would have stifled him.—Does the Académie des Sciences number many members who have passed through the technical schools? Two or three, it may be; but the man of genius invariably appears from outside. In the particular sciences which are studied at these schools, genius obeys no laws but its own; it only develops under circumstances over which we have no control; and neither the Government, nor anthropology, knows the conditions. Riquet, Perronet, Leonardo da Vinci, Cachin, Palladio, Brunelleschi, Michel Angelo, Bramante, Vauban, and Vicat all derived their genius from unobserved causes and preparation to which we give the name of chance—the great word for fools to fall back upon. Schools or no schools, these sublime workers have never been lacking in every age. And now, does the Government, by means of organizing, obtain works of public utility better done or at a cheaper rate?

“In the first place, private enterprise does very well without professional engineers; and, in the second, State-directed works are the most expensive of all; and besides the actual outlay, there is the cost of the maintenance of the great staff of the Roads and Bridges Department. Finally, in other countries where they have no institutions of this kind, in Germany, England, and Italy, such public works are carried out quite as well, and cost less than ours in France. Each of the three countries is well known for new and useful inventions of this kind. I know it is the fashion to speak of our Écoles as if they were the envy of Europe; but Europe has been watching us these fifteen years, and nowhere will you find the like instituted elsewhere. The English, those shrewd men of business, have better schools among their working classes, where they train practical men, who become conspicuous at once when they rise from practical work to theory. Stephenson and Macadam were not pupils in these famous institutions of ours.

“But where is the use? When young and clever engineers, men of spirit and enthusiasm, have solved at the outset of their career the problem of the maintenance of the roads of France, which requires hundreds of millions of francs

every twenty-five years, which roads are in a deplorable state, it is in vain for them to publish learned treatises and memorials; everything is swallowed down by the board of direction, everything goes in and nothing comes out of a central bureau in Paris, where the old men are jealous of their juniors, and high places are refuges for superannuated blunderers.

“This is how, with a body of educated men distributed all over France, a body which is part of the machinery of administrative government, and to whom the country looks for direction and enlightenment on the great questions within their department, it will probably happen that we in France shall still be talking about railways when other countries have finished theirs. Now, if ever France ought to demonstrate the excellence of her technical schools as an institution, should it not be in a magnificent public work of this special kind, destined to change the face of many countries, and to double the length of human life by modifying the laws of time and space? Belgium, the United States, Germany, and England, without an *École Polytechnique*, will have a network of railways while our engineers are still tracing out the plans, and hideous jobbery lurking behind the projects will check their execution. You cannot lay a stone in France until half a score of scribblers in Paris have drawn up a driveling report that nobody wants. The Government, therefore, gets no good of its technical schools; and as for the individual—he is tied down to a mediocre career, his life is a cruel delusion. Certain it is that with the abilities which he displayed between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five he would have gained more reputation and riches if he had been left to shift for himself than he will acquire in the career to which Government condemns him. As a merchant, a scientific man, or a soldier, this picked man would have a wide field before him, his precious faculties and enthusiasm would not have been prematurely and stupidly exhausted. Then where is the advance? Assuredly the individual and the State both lose by the present system. Does not an experiment carried on for half a century show that changes are needed in the way the institution is worked? What



priesthood qualifies a man for the task of selecting from a whole generation those who shall hereafter be the learned class of France? What studies should not these high priests of Destiny have made? A knowledge of mathematics is, perhaps, scarcely so necessary as physiological knowledge; and does it not seem to you that something of that clairvoyance which is the wizardry of great men might be required too? As a matter of fact, the examiners are old professors, men worthy of all honor, grown old in harness; their duty it is to discover the best memories, and there is an end of it; they can do nothing but what is required of them. Truly their functions should be the most important ones in the State, and call for extraordinary men to fulfill them.

“Do not think, my dear friend and patron, that my censure is confined to the École through which I myself passed; it applies not only to the institution itself, but also and still more to the methods by which lads are admitted; that is to say, to the system of competitive examination. Competition is a modern invention, and essentially bad. It is bad not only in learning but in every possible connection, in the arts, in every election made of men, projects, or things. It is unfortunate that our famous schools should not have turned out better men than any other chance assemblage of lads; but it is still more disgraceful that among the prizemen at the Institute there has been no great painter, musician, architect, or sculptor; even as for the past twenty years the general elections have swept no single great statesman to the front out of all the shoals of mediocrities. My remarks have a bearing upon an error which is vitiating both politics and education in France. This cruel error is based on the following principle, which organizers have overlooked:

“*Nothing in experience or in the nature of things can warrant the assumption that the intellectual qualities of early manhood will be those of maturity.*”

“At the present time I have been brought in contact with several distinguished men who are studying the many moral maladies which prey upon France. They recognize, as I

do, the fact that secondary education forces a sort of temporary capacity in those who have neither present work nor future prospects; and that the enlightenment diffused by primary education is of no advantage to the State, because it is bereft of belief and sentiment.

“Our whole educational system calls for sweeping reform, which should be carried out under the direction of a man of profound knowledge, a man with a strong will, gifted with that legislative faculty which, possibly, is found in Jean-Jacques Rousseau alone of all moderns.

“Then, perhaps, the superfluous specialists might find employment in elementary teaching; it is badly needed by the mass of the people. We have not enough patient and devoted teachers for the training of these classes. The deplorable prevalence of crimes and misdemeanors points to a weak spot in our social system—the one-sided education which tends to weaken the fabric of society, by teaching the masses to think sufficiently to reject the religious beliefs necessary for their government, yet not enough to raise them to a conception of the theory of obedience and duty, which is the last word of transcendental philosophy. It is impossible to put a whole nation through a course of Kant; and belief and use and wont are more wholesome for the people than study and argument.

“If I had to begin again from the very beginning, I dare say I might enter a seminary and incline to the life of a simple country parson or a village schoolmaster. But now I have gone too far to be a mere elementary teacher; and, besides, a wider field of action is open to me than the school-house or the parish. I cannot go the whole way with the Saint-Simonians, with whom I am tempted to throw in my lot; but with all their mistakes, they have laid a finger on many weak points in our social system, the results of our legislation, which will be palliated rather than remedied—simply putting off the evil day for France.—Good-by, dear sir; in spite of these observations of mine, rest assured of my respectful and faithful friendship, a friendship which can only grow with time.

“GRÉGOIRE GÉRARD.”

Acting on old business habit, Grossetête had indorsed the letter with the rough draft of a reply, and written beneath it the sacramental word "Answered."

"MY DEAR GÉRARD,—It is the more unnecessary to enter upon any discussion of the observations contained in your letter, since that chance (to make use of the word for fools) enables me to make you an offer which will practically extricate you from a position in which you find yourself so ill at ease. Mme. Graslin, who owns the Forest of Montégnac, and a good deal of barren land below the long range of hills on which the forest lies, has a notion of turning her vast estates to some account, of exploiting the woods and bringing the stony land into cultivation. Small pay and plenty of work! A great result to be brought about by insignificant means, a district to be transformed! Abundance made to spring up on the barest rock! Is not this what you wished to do, you who would fain realize a poet's dream? From the sincere ring of your letter, I do not hesitate to ask you to come to Limoges to see me; but do not send in your resignation, my friend, only sever your connection with your corps, explain to the authorities that you are about to make a study of some problems that lie within your province, but outside the limits of your work for the Government. In that way you will lose none of your privileges, and you will gain time in which to decide whether this scheme of the curé's at Montégnac, which finds favor in Mme. Graslin's eyes, is a feasible one. If these vast changes should prove to be practicable, I will lay the possible advantages before you by word of mouth, and not by letter.—Believe me to be, always sincerely, your friend,

"GROSSETÊTE."

For all reply Mme. Graslin wrote:

"Thank you, my friend; I am waiting to see your protégé."

She showed the letter to M. Bonnet with the remark, "Here is one more wounded creature seeking the great hospital!"

The curé read the letter and re-read it, took two or three turns upon the terrace, and handed the paper back to Mme. Graslin.

"It comes from a noble nature, the man has something in him," he said. "He writes that the schools, invented by the spirit of the Revolution, manufacture ineptitude; for my own part, I call them manufactories of unbelief; for if M. Gérard is not an atheist, he is a Protestant——"

"We will ask him," she said, struck with the curé's answer.

A fortnight later, in the month of December, M. Grosse-tête came to Montégnac, in spite of the cold, to introduce his protégé. Véronique and M. Bonnet awaited his arrival with impatience.

"One must love you very much, my child," said the old man, taking both of Véronique's hands, and kissing them with the old-fashioned elderly gallantry which a woman never takes amiss; "yes, one must love you very much indeed to stir out of Limoges in such weather as this; but I had made up my mind that I must come in person to make you a present of M. Grégoire Gérard. Here he is.—A man after your own heart, M. Bonnet," the old banker added with an affectionate greeting to the curé.

Gérard's appearance was not very prepossessing. He was a thick-set man of middle height; his neck was lost in his shoulders, to use the common expression; he had the golden hair and red eyes of an Albino; and his eyelashes and eyebrows were almost white. Although, as often happens in these cases, his complexion was dazzlingly fair, its original beauty was destroyed by the very apparent pits and seams left by an attack of smallpox; much reading had doubtless injured his eyesight, for he wore colored spectacles. Nor when he divested himself of a thick overcoat, like a *gendarme's*, did his dress redeem these personal defects.

The way in which his clothes were put on and buttoned, like his untidy cravat and crumpled shirt, were distinctive signs of that personal carelessness, laid to the charge of learned men, who are all, more or less, oblivious of their surroundings. His face and bearing, the great development

of chest and shoulders, as compared with his thin legs, suggested a sort of physical deterioration produced by meditative habits, not uncommon in those who think much; but the stout heart and eager intelligence of the writer of the letter were plainly visible on a forehead which might have been chiseled in Carrara marble. Nature seemed to have reserved her seal of greatness for the brow, and stamped it with the steadfastness and goodness of the man. The nose was of the true Gallic type, and blunted. The firm, straight lines of the mouth indicated an absolute discretion and the sense of economy; but the whole face looked old before its time, and worn with study.

Mme. Graslin turned to speak to the inventor. "We already owe you thanks, monsieur," she said, "for being so good as to come to superintend engineering work in a country which can hold out no inducements to you save the satisfaction of knowing that you can do good."

"M. Grossetête told me enough about you on our way here, madame," he answered, "to make me feel very glad to be of any use to you. The prospect of living near to you and M. Bonnet seemed to me charming. Unless I am driven away, I look to spend my life here."

"We will try to give you no cause for changing your opinion," smiled Mme. Graslin.

Grossetête took her aside. "Here are the papers which the public prosecutor gave me," he said. "He seemed very much surprised that you did not apply directly to him. All that you have asked has been done promptly and with good will. In the first place, your protégé will be reinstated in all his rights as a citizen; and in the second, Catherine Curieux will be sent to you in three months' time."

"Where is she?" asked Véronique.

"At the Hôpital Saint-Louis," Grossetête answered. "She cannot leave Paris until she is recovered."

"Ah! is she ill, poor thing?"

"You will find all that you want to know here," said Grossetête, holding out a packet.

Véronique went back to her guests, and led the way to the magnificent dining-hall on the ground floor, walking between

Grossetête and Gérard. She presided over the dinner without joining them, for she had made it a rule to take her meals alone since she had come to Montégnac. No one but Aline was in the secret, which the girl kept scrupulously until her mistress was in danger of her life.

The mayor of Montégnac, the justice of the peace, and the doctor had naturally been invited to meet the newcomer.

The doctor, a young man of seven-and-twenty, Roubaud by name, was keenly desirous of making the acquaintance of the great lady of Limousin. The curé was the better pleased to introduce him at the château since it was M. Bonnet's wish that Vénique should gather some sort of society about her, to distract her thoughts from herself, and to find some mental food. Roubaud was one of the young doctors perfectly equipped in his science, such as the *École de Médecine* turns out in Paris, a man who might, without doubt, have looked to a brilliant future in the vast theater of the capital: but he had seen something of the strife of ambitions there, and took fright, conscious that he had more knowledge than capacity for scheming, more aptitude than greed; his gentle nature had inclined him to the narrower theater of provincial life, where he hoped to win appreciation sooner than in Paris.

At Limoges Roubaud had come into collision with old-fashioned ways and patients not to be shaken in their prejudices; he had been won over by M. Bonnet, who at sight of the kindly and prepossessing face had thought that here was a worker to co-operate with him. Roubaud was short and fair-haired, and would have been rather uninteresting looking but for the gray eyes, which revealed the physiologist's sagacity and the perseverance of the student. Hitherto Montégnac was fain to be content with an old army surgeon, who found his cellars a good deal more interesting than his patients, and who, moreover, was past the hard work of a country doctor. He happened to die just at that time. Roubaud had been in Montégnac for some eighteen months, and was very popular there; but Desplein's young disciple, one of the followers of Cabanis, was no Catholic in his beliefs. In fact, as to religion, he had lapsed

into a fatal indifference, from which he was not to be roused. He was the despair of the curé, not that there was any harm whatever in him, his invariable absence from church was excused by his profession, he never talked on religious topics, he was incapable of making proselytes, no good Catholic could have behaved better than he, but he declined to occupy himself with a problem which, to his thinking, was beyond the scope of the human mind; and the curé once hearing him let fall the remark that Pantheism was the religion of all great thinkers, fancied that Roubaud inclined to the Pythagorean doctrine of the transformation of souls.

Roubaud, meeting Mme. Graslin for the first time, felt violently startled at the sight of her. His medical knowledge enabled him to divine in her face and bearing and worn features unheard-of suffering of mind and body, a preternatural strength of character, and the great faculties which can endure the strain of very different vicissitudes. He, in a manner, read her inner history, even the dark places deliberately hidden away; and more than this, he saw the disease that preyed upon the secret heart of this fair woman; for there are certain tints in human faces that indicate a poison working in the thoughts, even as the color of fruit will betray the presence of the worm at its core. From that time forward M. Roubaud felt so strongly attracted to Mme. Graslin, that he feared to be drawn beyond the limit where friendship ends. There was an eloquence, which men always understand, in Véronique's brows and attitude, and, above all, in her eyes; it was sufficiently unmistakable that she was dead to love, even as other women with a like eloquence proclaim the contrary. The doctor became her chivalrous worshiper on the spot. He exchanged a swift glance with the curé, and M. Bonnet said within himself—

“Here is the flash from heaven that will change this poor unbeliever? Mme. Graslin will have more eloquence than I.”

The mayor, an old countryman, overawed by the splendor of the dining-room, and surprised to be asked to meet one of the richest men in the department, had put on his best clothes for the occasion; he felt somewhat uneasy in them, and scarcely more at ease with his company. Mme. Graslin,

too, in her mourning dress was an awe-inspiring figure; the worthy mayor was dumb. He had once been a farmer at Saint-Léonard, had bought the one habitable house in the township, and cultivated the land that belonged to it himself. He could read and write, but only managed to acquit himself in his official capacity with the help of the justice's clerk, who prepared his work for him; so he ardently desired the advent of a notary, meaning to lay the burden of his public duties on official shoulders when that day should come; but Montégnac was so poverty-stricken, that a resident notary was hardly needed, and the notaries of the principal place in the arrondissement found clients in Montégnac.

The justice of the peace, Clousier by name, was a retired barrister from Limoges. Briefs had grown scarce with the learned gentleman, owing to a tendency on his part to put in practice the noble maxim that a barrister is the first judge of the client and the case. About the year 1809 he obtained this appointment; the salary was a meager pittance, but enough to live upon. In this way he had reached the most honorable but the most complete penury. Twenty-two years of residence in the poor commune had transformed the worthy lawyer into a countryman, scarcely to be distinguished from any of the small farmers round about, whom he resembled even in the cut of his coat. But beneath Clousier's homely exterior dwelt a clairvoyant spirit, a philosophical politician whose Gallio's attitude was due to his perfect knowledge of human nature and of men's motives. For a long time he had baffled M. Bonnet's perspicacity. The man who, in a higher sphere, might have played the active part of a l'Hôpital, incapable of intrigue, like all deep thinkers, had come at last to lead the contemplative life of a hermit of olden time. Rich without doubt, with all the gains of privation, he was swayed by no personal considerations; he knew the law and judged impartially. His life, reduced to the barest necessities, was regular and pure. The peasants loved and respected M. Clousier for the fatherly disinterestedness with which he settled their disputes and gave advice in their smallest difficulties. For the last two years "Old Clousier," as everyone called him in Montégnac, had had



one of his nephews to help him, a rather intelligent young man, who, at a later day, contributed not a little to the prosperity of the commune.

The most striking thing about the old man's face was the broad vast forehead. Two bushy masses of white hair stood out on either side of it. A florid complexion and magisterial portliness might give the impression that (in spite of his real sobriety) he was as earnest a disciple of Bacchus as of Troplong and Toullier. His scarcely audible voice indicated asthmatic oppression of breathing; possibly the dry air of Montégnac had counted for something in his decision when he made up his mind to accept the post. His little house had been fitted up for him by the well-to-do sabot maker, his landlord. Clousier had already seen Véronique at church, and had formed his own opinion of her, which opinion he kept to himself; he had not even spoken of her to M. Bonnet, with whom he was beginning to feel at home. For the first time in his life, the justice of the peace found himself in the company of persons able to understand him.

When the six guests had taken their places round a handsomely appointed table (for Véronique had brought all her furniture with her to Montégnac), there was a brief embarrassed pause. The doctor, the mayor, and the justice were none of them acquainted with Grossetête or with Gérard. But during the first course the banker's geniality thawed the ice, Mme. Graslin graciously encouraged M. Roubaud and drew out Gérard; under her influence all these different natures, full of exquisite qualities, recognized their kinship. It was not long before each felt himself to be in a congenial atmosphere. So by the time dessert was put on the table, and the crystal and the gilded edges of the porcelain sparkled, when choice wines were set in circulation, handed to the guests by Aline, Maurice Champion, and Grossetête's man, the conversation had become more confidential, so that the four noble natures thus brought together by chance felt free to speak their real minds on the great subjects that men love to discuss in good faith.

"Your leave of absence coincided with the Revolution of

July," Grosscôte said, looking at Gérard in a way that asked his opinion.

"Yes," answered the engineer. "I was in Paris during the three famous days. I saw it all. I drew some disheartening conclusions."

"What were they?" M. Bonnet asked quickly.

"There is no patriotism left except under the workman's shirt," answered Gérard. "Therein lies the ruin of France. The Revolution of July is the defeat of men who are notable for birth, fortune, and talent, and a defeat in which they acquiesce. The enthusiastic zeal of the masses has gained a victory over the rich and intelligent classes, to whom zeal and enthusiasm are antipathetic."

"To judge by last year's events," added M. Clousier, the change is a direct encouragement to the evil which is devouring us—to Individualism. In fifty years' time every generous question will be replaced by a '*What is that to me?*' the watchword of independent opinion descended from the spiritual heights where Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and Knox inaugurated it, till even in political economy each has a right to his own opinion. *Each for himself! Let each man mind his own business!*—these two terrible phrases, together with *What is that to me?* complete a trinity of doctrine for the bourgeoisie and the peasant proprietors. This egoism is the result of defects in our civil legislation, somewhat too hastily accomplished in the first instance, and now confirmed by the terrible consecration of the Revolution of July."

The justice relapsed into his wonted silence again with this speech, which gave the guests plenty to think over. Then M. Bonnet ventured yet further, encouraged by Clousier's remarks, and by a glance exchanged between Gérard and Grosscôte.

"Good King Charles X.," said he, "has just failed in the most provident and salutary enterprise that king ever undertook for the happiness of a nation intrusted to him. The Church should be proud of the share she had in his councils. But it was the heart and brain of the upper classes which failed him, as they had failed before over the great question of the law with regard to the succession of the eldest son,

the eternal honor of the one bold statesman of the Restoration—the Comte de Peyronnet. To reconstruct the nation on the basis of the family, to deprive the press of its power to do harm without restricting its usefulness, to confine the elective chamber to the functions for which it was really intended, to give back to religion its influence over the people,—such were the four cardinal points of domestic policy of the House of Bourbon. Well, in twenty years' time all France will see the necessity of that great and salutary course. King Charles X. was, moreover, more insecure in the position which he decided to quit than in the position in which his paternal authority came to an end. The future history of our fair country, when everything shall be periodically called in question, when ceaseless discussion shall take the place of action, when the press shall become the sovereign power and the tool of the basest ambitions, will prove the wisdom of the king who has just taken with him the real principles of government. History will render to him his due for the courage with which he withstood his best friends, when once he had probed the wound, seen its extent, and the pressing necessity for the treatment, which has not been continued by those for whom he threw himself into the breach."

"Well, M. le Curé, you go straight to the point without the slightest disguise," cried M. Gérard, "but I do not say nay. When Napoleon made his Russian campaign he was forty years ahead of his age; he was misunderstood. Russia and England, in 1830, can explain the campaign of 1812. Charles X. was in the same unfortunate position; twenty-five years hence his ordinances may perhaps become law."

"France, too eloquent a country not to babble, too vain-glorious to recognize real ability, in spite of the sublime good sense of her language and the mass of her people, is the very last country in which to introduce the system of two deliberating chambers," the justice of the peace remarked. "At any rate, not without the admirable safeguards against these elements in the national character, devised by Napoleon's experience. The representative system may work in a country like England, where its action is cir-

cumscribed by the nature of the soil; but the right of primogeniture, as applied to real estate, is a necessary part of it; without this factor, the representative system becomes sheer nonsense. England owes its existence to the quasi-feudal law which transmitted the house and lands to the oldest son. Russia is firmly seated on the feudal system of autocracy. For these reasons, both nations at the present day are making alarming progress. Austria could not have resisted our invasions as she did, nor declared a second war against Napoleon, had it not been for the law of primogeniture, which preserves the strength of the family and maintains production on the large scale necessary to the State. The House of Bourbon, conscious that Liberalism had relegated France to the rank of a third-rate power in Europe, determined to regain and keep their place, and the country shook off the Bourbons when they had all but saved the country. I do not know how deep the present state of things will sink us."

"If there should be a war," cried Grossetête, "France will be without horses, as Napoleon was in 1813, when he was reduced to the resources of France alone, and could not make use of the victories of Lutzen and Bautzen, and was crushed at Leipsic! If peace continues, the evil will grow worse: twenty years hence, the number of horned cattle and horses in France will be diminished by one-half."

"M. Grossetête is right," said Gérard.—"So the work which you have decided to attempt here is a service done to your country, madame," he added, turning to Véronique.

"Yes," said the justice of the peace, "because Mme. Graslin has but one son. But will this chance in the succession repeat itself? For a certain time, let us hope, the great and magnificent scheme of cultivation which you are to carry into effect will be in the hands of one owner, and therefore will continue to provide grazing land for horses and cattle. But, in spite of all, a day will come when forest and field will be either divided up or sold in lots. Division and subdivision will follow, until the six thousand acres of plain will count ten or twelve hundred owners; and when that time comes, there will be no more horses nor prize cattle."

"Oh! when that time comes——" said the mayor.

"There is a *What is that to me?*" cried M. Grossetête, "and M. Clousier sounded the signal for it; he is caught in the act.—But, monsieur," the banker went on gravely, addressing the bewildered mayor, "the time *has come!* Round about Paris for a ten-league radius, the land is divided up into little patches that will hardly pasture sufficient milch cows. The commune of Argenteuil numbers thirty-eight thousand eight hundred and eighty-five plots of land, a good many of them bringing in less than fifteen centimes a year! If it were not for high farming and manure from Paris, which gives heavy crops of fodder of different kinds, I do not know how cow-keepers and dairymen would manage. As it is, the animals are peculiarly subject to inflammatory diseases consequent on the heating diet and confinement to cow-sheds. They wear out their cows round about Paris just as they wear out horses in the streets. Then market-gardens, orchards, nurseries, and vineyards pay so much better than pasture, that the grazing land is gradually diminishing. A few years more, and milk will be sent in by express to Paris, like salt fish, and what is going on round Paris is happening also about all large towns. The evils of the minute subdivision of landed property are extending round a hundred French cities; some day all France will be eaten up by them.

"In 1800, according to Chaptal, there were about five million acres of vineyard; exact statistics would show fully five times as much to-day. When Normandy is split up into an infinitude of small holdings, by our system of inheritance fifty per cent. of the horse and cattle trade there will fall off; still Normandy will have the monopoly of the Paris milk trade, for luckily the climate will not permit vine culture. Another curious thing to notice is the steady rise in the price of butcher meat. In 1814, prices ranged from seven to eleven sous per pound; in 1850, twenty years hence, Paris will pay twenty sous, unless some genius is raised up to carry out the theories of Charles X."

"You have pointed out the greatest evil in France," said the justice of the peace. "The cause of it lies in the chapter *Des Successions* in the Civil Code, wherein the equal division of real estate among the children of the family is required.

That is the pestle which is constantly grinding the country to powder, gives to everyone but a life-interest in property which cannot remain as it is after his death. A continuous process of decomposition (for the reverse process is never set up) will end by ruining France. The French Revolution generated a deadly virus, and the Days of July have set the poison working afresh; this dangerous germ of disease is the acquisition of land by peasants. If the chapter *Des Successions* is the origin of the evil, it is through the peasant that it reaches its worst phase. The peasant never relinquishes the land he has won. Let a bit of land once get between the ogre's ever-hungry jaws, he divides and subdivides it till there are but strips of three furrows left. Nay, even there he does not stop! he will divide the three furrows in lengths. The commune of Argenteuil, which M. Grossetête instanced just now, is a case in point. The preposterous value which the peasants set on the smallest scraps of land makes it quite impossible to reconstruct an estate. The law and procedure are made a dead letter at once by this division, and ownership is reduced to absurdity. But it is a comparatively trifling matter that the minute subdivision of the law should paralyze the treasury and the law by making it impossible to carry out its wisest regulations. There are far greater evils than even these. There are actually landlords of property bringing in fifteen and twenty centimes per annum!

"Monsieur has just said something about the falling off of cattle and horses," Clousier continued, looking at Grossetête; "the system of inheritance counts for much in that matter. The peasant proprietor keeps cows, and cows only, because milk enters into his diet; he sells the calves; he even sells butter. He has no mind to raise oxen, still less to breed horses; he has only just sufficient fodder for a year's consumption; and when a dry spring comes and hay is scarce, he is forced to take his cow to market; he cannot afford to keep her. If it should fall out so unluckily that two bad hay harvests came in succession, you would see some strange fluctuations in the price of beef in Paris, and, above all, in veal, when the third year came."

“And how would they do for ‘patriotic banquets’ then?” asked the doctor, smiling.

“Ah!” exclaimed Mme. Graslin, glancing at Roubaud, “so even here, as everywhere else, politics must be served up with journalistic ‘items.’”

“In this bad business the bourgeoisie play the part of American pioneers,” continued Clousier. “They buy up the large estates, too large for the peasant to meddle with, and divide them. After the bulk has been cut up, and triturerated, a forced sale or an ordinary sale in lots hands it over sooner or later to the peasant. Everything nowadays is reduced to figures, and I know of none more eloquent than these:—France possesses forty-nine million *hectares* of land, for the sake of convenience, let us say forty, deducting something for roads and highroads, dunes, canals, land out of cultivation, and wastes like the plain of Montégnac, which need capital. Now, out of forty million *hectares* to a population of thirty-two millions, there are a hundred and twenty-five million parcels of land, according to the land tax returns. I have not taken the fractions into account. So we have outrun the agrarian law, and yet neither poverty nor discord are at an end. Then the next thing will be that those who are turning the land into crumbs and diminishing the output of produce, will find mouthpieces for the cry that true social justice only permits the usufruct of the land to each. They will say that ownership in perpetuity is robbery. The Saint-Simonians have begun already.”

“There spoke the magistrate,” said Grossetête, “and this is what the banker adds to his bold reflections. When landed property became tenable by peasants and small shopkeepers, a great wrong was done to France, though the Government does not so much as suspect it. Suppose that we set down the whole mass of peasants at three million families, after deducting the paupers. Those families all belong to the wage-earning class. Their wages are paid in money instead of in kind——”

“There is another immense blunder in our legislation,” Clousier cried, breaking in on the banker. “In 1790 it might still have been possible to pass a law empowering

employers to pay wages in kind, but now—to introduce such a measure would be to risk a Revolution.”

“In this way,” Grossetête continued, “the money of the country passes into the pockets of the proletariat. Now, the peasant has one passion, one desire, one determination, one aim in life—to die a landed proprietor. This desire, as M. Clousier has very clearly shown, is one result of the Revolution—a direct consequence of the sale of the national lands. Only those who have no idea of the state of things in country districts could refuse to admit that each of those three million families annually buries fifty francs as a regular thing, and in this way a hundred and fifty millions of francs are withdrawn from circulation every year. The science of political economy has reduced to an axiom the statement that a five-franc piece, if it passes through a hundred hands in the course of a day, does duty for five hundred francs. Now, it is certain for some of us old observers of the state of things in country districts, that the peasant fixes his eyes on a bit of land, keeps ready to pounce upon it, and bides his time—meanwhile he never invests his capital. The intervals in the peasant’s land-purchases should, therefore, be reckoned at periods of seven years. For seven years, consequently, a capital of eleven hundred million francs is lying idle in the peasants’ hands; and as the lower middle classes do the same thing to quite the same extent, and behave in the same way with regard to land on too large a scale for the peasant to nibble at, in forty-two years France loses the interest on two milliards of francs at least—that is to say, on something like a hundred millions every seven years, or six hundred millions in forty-two years. But this is not the only loss. France has failed to create the worth of six hundred millions in agricultural or industrial produce. And this failure to produce may be taken as a loss of twelve hundred million francs; for if the market price of a product were not double the actual cost of production, commerce would be at a standstill. The proletariat deprives itself of six hundred million francs of wages. These six hundred millions of initial loss that represent, for an economist, twelve hundred millions of loss of benefit derived from circulation,



explain how it is that our commerce, shipping trade, and agriculture compare so badly with the state of things in England. In spite of the differences between the two countries (a good two-thirds of them, moreover, in our favor), England could mount our cavalry twice over, and everyone there eats meat. But then, under the English system of land tenure, it is almost impossible for the working classes to buy land, and so all the money is kept in constant circulation. So beside the evils of the comminution of the land, and the decay of the trade in cattle, horses, and sheep, the chapter *Des Successions* costs us a further loss of six hundred million francs of interest on the capital buried by the peasants and tradespeople, or twelve hundred million francs' worth of produce (at the least)—that is to say, a total loss of three milliards of francs withdrawn from circulation every half-century."

"The moral effect is worse than the material effect!" cried the curé. "We are turning the peasantry into pauper landowners, and half educating the lower middle classes. It will not be long before the canker of *Each for himself!* *Let each mind his own business!* which did its work last July among the upper classes, will spread to the middle classes. A proletariat of hardened materialists, knowing no God but envy, no zeal but the despair of hunger, with no faith nor belief left, will come to the front, and trample the heart of the country under foot. The foreigner, waxing great under a monarchical government, will find us under the shadow of royalty without the reality of a king, without law under the cover of legality, owners of property but not proprietors, with the right of election but without a government, listless holders of free and independent opinions, equal but equally unfortunate. Let us hope that between now and then God will raise up in France the man for the time, one of those elect who breathe a new spirit into a nation, a man who, whether he is a Sylla or a Marius, whether he comes from the heights or rises from the depths, will reconstruct society."

"The first thing to do will be to send him to the Assizes or to the police-court," said Gérard. "The judgment of

Socrates or of Christ will be given to him, here in 1831, as of old in Attica and at Jerusalem. To-day, as of old, jealous mediocrity allows the thinker to starve. If the great political physicians who have studied the diseases of France, and are opposed to the spirit of the age, should resist to the starvation-point, we ridicule them, and treat them as visionaries. Here in France we revolt against the sovereign thinker, the great man of the future, just as we rise in revolt against the political sovereign."

"But in those old times the Sophists had a very limited audience," cried the justice of the peace; "while to-day, through the medium of the periodical press, they can lead a whole nation astray; and the press which pleads for common-sense finds no echo!"

The mayor looked at M. Clousier with intense astonishment. Mine. Graslin, delighted to find a simple justice of the peace interested in such grave problems, turned to her neighbor M. Roubaud with, "Do you know M. Clousier?"

"Not till to-day! Madame, you are working miracles," he added in her ear. "And yet look at his forehead, how finely shaped it is! It is like the classical or traditional brow that sculptors gave to Lysurgus and the wise men of Greece, is it not?—Clearly there was an impolitic side to the Revolution of July," he added aloud, after going through Grossetête reasonings. He had been a medical student, and perhaps would have lent a hand at a barricade.

"'Twas trebly impolitic," said Clousier. "We have concluded the case for law and finance, now for the Government. The royal power, weakened by the dogma of the national sovereignty, in virtue of which the election was made on the 9th of August 1830, will strive to overcome its rival, a principle which gives the people the right of changing a dynasty every time they fail to apprehend the intentions of their king; so there is a domestic struggle before us which will check progress in France for a long while yet.

"England has wisely steered clear of all these sunken rocks," said Gérard. "I have been in England. I admire the hive which sends swarms over the globe to settle and

civilize. In England political debate is a comedy intended to satisfy the people and to hide the action of authority which moves untrammelled in its lofty sphere; election there, is not, as in France, the referring of a question to a stupid bourgeoisie. If the land were divided up, England would cease to exist at once. The great landowners and the lords control the machinery of Government. They have a navy which takes possession of whole quarters of the globe (and under the very eyes of Europe) to fulfill the exigencies of their trade, and form colonies for the discontented and unsatisfactory. Instead of waging war on men of ability, annihilating and underrating them, the English aristocracy continually seeks them out, rewards and assimilates them. The English are prompt to act in all that concerns the Government, and in the choice of men and material, while with us action of any kind is slow; and yet they are slow, and we impatient. Capital with them is adventurous, and always moving; with us it is shy and suspicious. Here is corroboration of M. Grossetête's statements about the loss to industry of the peasants' capital; I can sketch the difference in a few words. English capital, which is constantly circulating, has created ten milliards of wealth in the shape of expanded manufactures and joint stock companies paying dividends; while here in France, though we have more capital, it has not yielded one-tenth part of the profit.

"It is all the more extraordinary," said Roubaud, "since that they are lymphatic, and we are generally either sanguine or nervous."

"Here is a great problem for you to study, monsieur," said Clousier. "Given a national temperament, to find the institutions best adapted to counteract it. Truly, Cromwell was a great legislator. He, one man, made England what she is by promulgating the *Act of Navigation*, which made the English the enemy of all other nations, and infused into them a fierce pride, that has served them as a lever. But in spite of their garrison at Malta, as soon as France and Russia fully understand the part to be played in politics by the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, the discovery of a new route to Asia by way of Egypt or the Euphrates valley

will be a death-blow to England, just as the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope was the ruin of Venice."

"And nothing of God in all this!" cried the curé. "M. Clousier and M. Roubaud are indifferent in matters of religion . . . and you, monsieur?" he asked questioningly, turning to Gérard.

"A Protestant," said Grossetête.

"You guessed rightly!" exclaimed Véronique, with a glance at the curé as she offered her hand to Clousier to return to her apartments.

All prejudices excited by M. Gérard's appearance quickly vanished, and the three notables of Montégnac congratulated themselves on such an acquisition.

"Unluckily," said M. Bonnet, "there is a cause for antagonism between Russia and the Catholic countries on the shores of the Mediterranean; a schism of little real importance divides the Greek Church from the Latin, for the great misfortune of humanity."

"Each preaches for his saint," said Mme. Graslin, smiling. "M. Grossetête thinks of lost milliards; M. Clousier of law in confusion; the doctor sees in legislation a question of temperaments; M. le Curé sees in religion an obstacle in the way of a good understanding between France and Russia."

"Please add, madame," said Gérard, "that in the sequestration of capital by the peasant and small tradesman, I see the delay of the completion of railways in France——"

"Then what would you have?" asked she.

"Oh! The admirable Councilors of State who devised laws in the time of the Emperor and the *Corps législatif*, when those who had brains as well as those who had property had a voice in the election, a body whose sole function it was to oppose unwise laws or capricious wars. The present Chamber of Deputies is like to end, as you will see, by becoming the governing body, and legalized anarchy it will be."

"Great Heavens!" cried the curé in an access of lofty patriotism, "how is it that minds so enlightened"—he indicated Clousier, Roubaud, and Gérard—"see the evil, and point out the remedy, and do not begin by applying it to

themselves? All of you represent the classes attacked; all of you recognize the necessity of passive obedience on the part of the great masses in the State, an obedience like that of the soldier in time of war; all of you desire the unity of authority, and wish that it shall never be called in question. But that consolidation to which England has attained through the development of pride and material interests (which are a sort of belief) can only be attained here by sentiments induced by Catholicism, and you are not Catholics! I the priest drop my character, and reason with rationalists.

“How can you expect the masses to become religious and to obey if they see irreligion and relaxed discipline around them? A people united by any faith will easily get the better of men without belief. The law of the interest of all, which underlies patriotism, is at once annulled by the law of individual interest, which authorizes and implants selfishness. Nothing is solid and durable but that which is natural, and the natural basis of politics is the family. The family should be the basis of all institutions. A universal effect denotes a co-extensive cause. These things that you notice proceed from the social principle itself, which has no force, because it is based on independent opinion, and the right of private judgment is the forerunner of individualism. There is less wisdom in looking for the blessing of security from the intelligence and capacity of the majority, than in depending upon the intelligence of institutions and the capacity of one single man for the blessing of security. It is easier to find wisdom in one man than in a whole nation. The peoples have but a blind heart to guide them; they feel, but they do not see. A government must see, and must not be swayed by sentiments. There is therefore an evident contradiction between the first impulses of the masses and the action of authority which must direct their energy and give it unity. To find a great prince is a great chance (to use your language), but to trust your destinies to any assembly of men, even if they are honest, is madness.

“France is mad at this moment! Alas! you are as thoroughly convinced of this as I. If all men who really believe

what they say, as you do, would set the example in their own circle; if every intelligent thinker would set his hand to raising once more the altars of the great spiritual republic, of the one Church which has directed humanity, we might see once more in France the miracles wrought there by our fathers."

"What would you have, M. le Curé?" said Gérard, "if one must speak to you as in the confessional—I look on faith as a lie which you consciously tell yourself, on hope as a lie about the future, and on this charity of yours as a child's trick; one is a good boy, for the sake of the jam."

"And yet, monsieur, when hope rocks us we sleep well," said Mme. Graslin.

Roubaud, who was about to speak, supported by a glance from Grossetête and the curé, stopped short at the words.

"Is it any fault of ours," said Clousier, "if Jesus Christ had not time to formulate a system of government in accordance with His teaching, as Moses did and Confucius—the two greatest legislators whom the world has seen, for the Jews and the Chinese still maintain their national existence, though the first are scattered all over the earth, and the second an isolated people?"

"Ah! you are giving me a task indeed," said the curé candidly, "but I shall triumph, I shall convert all of you. . . . You are nearer the Faith than you think. Truth lurks beneath the lie; come forward but a step, and you return!"

And with this cry from the curé the conversation took a fresh direction.

The next morning before M. Grossetête went, he promised to take an active share in Véronique's schemes so soon as they should be judged practicable. Mme. Graslin and Gérard rode beside his traveling carriage as far as the point where the crossroad joined the highroad from Bordeaux to Lyon. Gérard was so eager to see the place, and Véronique so anxious to show it to him, that this ride had been planned overnight. After they took leave of the kind old man, they galloped down into the great plain and skirted the hillsides that lay between the château and the Living Rock. The surveyor recognized the rock embankment which Farrabesche

had pointed out; it stood up like the lowest course of masonry under the foundations of the hills, in such a sort that when the bed of this indestructible canal of nature's making should be cleared out, and the watercourses regulated so as not to choke it, irrigation would actually be facilitated by that long channel which lay about ten feet above the surface of the plain. The first thing to be done was to estimate the volume of water in the Gabou, and to make certain that the sides of the valley could hold it; no decision could be made till this was known.

Véronique gave a horse to Farrabesche, who was to accompany Gérard and acquaint him with the least details which he himself had observed. After some days of consideration Gérard thought the base of either parallel chains of hill solid enough (albeit of different material) to hold the water.

In the January of the following year, a wet season, Gérard calculated the probable amount of water discharged by the Gabou, and found that when the three watercourses had been diverted into the torrent, the total amount would be sufficient to water an area three times as great as the plain of Montégnaç. The dams across the Gabou, the masonry and engineering works needed to bring the water supply of the three little valleys into the plain, should not cost more than sixty thousand francs; for the surveyor discovered a quantity of chalky deposit on the common, so that lime would be cheap, and the forest being so near at hand, stone and timber would cost nothing even for transport. All the preparations could be made before the Gabou ran dry, so that when the important work should be begun it should quickly be finished. But the plain was another matter. Gérard considered that there the first preparation would cost at least two hundred thousand francs, sowing and planting apart.

The plain was to be divided into four squares of two hundred and fifty acres each. There was no question of breaking up the waste; the first thing to do was to remove the largest flints. Navvies would be employed to dig a great number of trenches and to line the channels with stone to keep the water in, for the water must be made to flow or to stand as required. All this work called for active, devoted,

and painstaking workers. Chance so ordered it that the plain was a straightforward piece of work, a level stretch, and the water with a ten-foot fall could be distributed at will. There was nothing to prevent the finest results in farming the land; here there might be just such a splendid green carpet as in North Italy, a source of wealth and of pride to Lombardy. Gérard sent to his late district for an old and experienced foreman, Fresquin by name.

Mme. Graslin, therefore, wrote to ask Grossetête to negotiate for her a loan of two hundred and fifty thousand francs on the security of her Government stock; the interest of six years, Gérard calculated, should pay off the debt, capital and interest. The loan was concluded in the course of the month of March; and by that time Gérard, with Fresquin's assistance, had finished all the preliminary operations, leveling, boring, observations, and estimates. The news of the great scheme had spread through the country and roused the poor people; and the indefatigable Farrabesche, Colorat, Clousier, Roubaud, and the mayor of Montégnac, all those, in fact, who were interested in the enterprise for its own sake or for Mme. Graslin's, chose the workers or gave the names of the poor who deserved to be employed.

Gérard bought partly for M. Grossetête, partly on his own account, some thousand acres of land on the other side of the road through Montégnac. Fresquin, his foreman, also took five hundred acres, and sent for his wife and children.

In the early days of April 1833, M. Grossetête came to Montégnac to see the land purchased for him by Gérard; but the principal motive of his journey was the arrival of Catherine Curieux. She had come by the diligence from Paris to Limoges, and Mme. Graslin was expecting her. Grossetête found Mme. Graslin about to start for the church. M. Bonnet was to say a Mass to ask the blessing of Heaven on the work about to begin. All the men, women, and children were present.

M. Grossetête brought forward a woman of thirty or thereabouts, who looked weak and out of health. "Here is your protégée," he said, addressing Véronique.



"Are you Catherine Curieux?" Mme. Graslin asked.

"Yes, madame."

For a moment Véronique looked at her; Catherine was rather tall, shapely, and pale; the exceeding sweetness of her features was not belied by the beautiful soft gray eyes. In the shape of her face and the outlines of her forehead there was a nobleness, a sort of grave and simple majesty, sometimes seen in very young girls' faces in the country, a kind of flower of beauty, which field work, and the constant wear of household cares, and sunburn, neglect of appearance, wither with alarming rapidity. From her attitude as she stood it was easy to discern that she would move with the ease of a daughter of the fields and something of an added grace, unconsciously learned in Paris. If Catherine had never left the Corrèze, she would no doubt have been by this time a wrinkled and withered woman, the bright tints in her face would have grown hard; but Paris, which had toned down the high color, had preserved her beauty; and ill-health, weariness, and sorrow had given to her the mysterious gifts of melancholy and of that inner life of thought denied to poor toilers in the field who lead an almost animal existence. Her dress likewise marked a distinction between her and the peasants; for it abundantly displayed the Parisian taste which even the least coquettish women are so quick to acquire. Catherine Curieux, not knowing what might await her, and unable to judge the lady in whose presence she stood, seemed somewhat embarrassed.

"Do you still love Farrabesche?" asked Mme. Graslin, when Grossetête left the two women together for a moment.

"Yes, madame," she answered, flushing red.

"But if you sent him a thousand francs while he was in prison, why did you not come to him when he came out? Do you feel any repugnance for him? Speak to me as you would to your own mother. Were you afraid that he had gone utterly to the bad? that he cared for you no longer?"

"No, madame; but I can neither read nor write. I was living with a very exacting old lady; she fell ill; we sat up with her of a night, and I had to nurse her. I knew the

time was coming near when Jacques would be out of prison, but I could not leave Paris until the lady died. She left me nothing, after all my devotion to her and her interests. I had made myself ill with sitting up with her and the hard work of nursing, and I wanted to get well again before I came back. I spent all my savings, and then I made up my mind to go into the Hôpital Saint-Louis, and have just been discharged as cured."

Mme. Graslin was touched by an explanation so simple.

"Well, but, my dear," she said, "tell me why you left your people so suddenly; what made you leave your child? why did you not send them news of you, or get someone to write——"

For all answer, Catherine wept.

"Madame," she said at last, reassured by the pressure of Véronique's hand, "I dare say I was wrong, but it was more than I could do to stop in the place. It was not that I felt that I had done wrong; it was the rest of them; I was afraid of their gossip and talk. So long as Jacques was here in danger, he could not do without me; but when he was gone, I felt as if I could not stop. There was I, a girl with a child and no husband! The lowest creature would have been better than I. If I had heard them say the least word about Benjamin or his father, I do not know what I should have done. I should have killed myself perhaps, or gone out of my mind. My own father or mother might have said something hasty in a moment of anger. Meek as I am, I am too irritable to bear hasty words or insult. I have been well punished; I could not see my child, and never a day passed but I thought of him! I wanted to be forgotten, and forgotten I am. Nobody has given me a thought. They thought I was dead, and yet many and many a time I felt I could like to leave everything to have one day here and see my little boy——"

"Your little boy—see, Catherine, here he is!"

Catherine looked up and saw Benjamin, and something like a feverish shiver ran through her.

"Benjamin," said Mme. Graslin, "come and kiss your mother."

"My mother?" cried Benjamin in amazement. He flung his arms round Catherine's neck, and she clasped him to her with wild energy. But the boy escaped, and ran away crying, "I will find *him*!"

Mme. Graslin, seeing that Catherine's strength was failing, made her sit down; and as she did so her eyes met M. Bonnet's look, her color rose, for in that keen glance her confessor read her heart. She spoke tremulously.

"I hope, M. le Curé," she said, "that you will marry Catherine and Farrabesche at once.—Do you not remember M. Bonnet, my child? He will tell you that Farrabesche has behaved himself like an honest man since he came back. Everyone in the countryside respects him; if there is a place in the world where you may live happily with the good opinion of everyone about you, it is here in Montégnac. With God's will, you will make your fortune here, for you shall be my tenants. Farrabesche has all his citizen's rights again."

"This is all true, my daughter," said the curé.

As he spoke, Farrabesche came in, led by his eager son. Face to face with Catherine in Mme. Graslin's presence, his face grew white, and he was mute. He saw how active the kindness of the one had been for him, and guessed all that the other had suffered in her enforced absence. Véronique turned to go with M. Bonnet, and the curé for his part wished to take Véronique aside. As soon as they were out of hearing, Véronique's confessor looked full at her and saw her color rise; she lowered her eyes like a guilty creature.

"You are degrading charity," he said severely.

"And how?" she asked, raising her head.

"Charity," said M. Bonnet, "is a passion as far greater than love, as humanity, madame, is greater than one human creature. All this is not the spontaneous work of disinterested virtue. You are falling from the grandeur of the service of man to the service of a single creature. In your kindness to Catherine and Farrabesche there is an alloy of memories and after-thoughts which spoils it in the sight of God. Pluck out the rest of the dart of the spirit of

evil from your heart. Do not spoil the value of your good deeds in this way. Will you ever attain at last to that holy ignorance of the good that you do which is the supreme grace of man's actions?"

Mme. Graslin turned away to dry her eyes. Her tears told the curé that his words had reached and probed some unhealed wound in her heart. Farrabesche, Catherine, and Benjamin came to thank their benefactress, but she made a sign to them to go away and leave her with M. Bonnet.

"You see how I have hurt them," she said, bidding him see their disappointed faces. And the tender-hearted curé beckoned to them to come back.

"You must be completely happy," she said.—"Here is the patent which gives you back all your rights as a citizen, and exempts you from the old humiliating formalities," she added, holding out to Farrabesche a paper which she had kept. Farrabesche kissed Véronique's hand. There was an expression of submissive affection and quiet devotion in his eyes, the devotion which nothing could change, the fidelity of a dog for his master.

"If Jacques has suffered much, madame, I hope that it will be possible for me to make up to him in happiness for the trouble he has been through," said Catherine; "for whatever he may have done, he is not bad."

Mme. Graslin turned away her head. The sight of their happiness seemed to crush her. M. Bonnet left her to go to the church, and she dragged herself thither on M. Grossetête's arm.

After breakfast, everyone went to see the work begun. All the old people of Montégnac were likewise present. Véronique stood between M. Grossetête and M. Bonnet on the top of the steep slope which the new road ascended, whence they could see the alignment of the four new roads, which served as a deposit for the stones taken off the land. Five navvies were clearing a space of eighteen feet (the width of each road), and throwing up a sort of embankment of good soil as they worked. Four men on either side were engaged in making a ditch, and these also made a bank of fertile earth along the edge of the field. Behind them came

two men, who dug holes at intervals, and planted trees. In each division, thirty laborers (chosen from among the poor), twenty women, and forty girls and children, eighty-six workers in all, were busy piling up the stones which the workmen riddled out along the bank so as to measure the quantity produced by each group. In this way all went abreast, and with such picked and enthusiastic workers rapid progress was being made. Grossetête promised to send some trees, and to ask for more, among Mme. Graslin's friends. It was evident that there would not be enough in the nursery plantations at the château to supply such a demand.

Towards the end of the day, which was to finish with a great dinner at the château, Farrabesche begged to speak with Mme. Graslin for a moment. Catherine came with him.

"Madame," he said, "you were so kind as to promise me the home farm. You meant to help me to a fortune when you granted me such a favor, but I have come round to Catherine's ideas about our future. If I did well there, there would be jealousy; a word is soon said; I might find things unpleasant, I am afraid, and besides, Catherine would never feel comfortable; it would be better for us to keep to ourselves, in fact. So I have come just to ask you if you will give us the land about the mouth of the Gabou, near the common, to farm instead, and a little bit of the wood yonder under the Living Rock. You will have a lot of workmen thereabouts in July, and it would be easy then to build a farmhouse on a knoll in a good situation. We should be very happy. I would send for Guépin, poor fellow, when he comes out of prison; he would work like a horse, and it is likely I might find a wife for him. My man is no do-nothing. No one will come up there to stare at us; we will colonize that bit of land, and it will be my great ambition to make a famous farm for you there. Besides, I have come to suggest a tenant for your great farm—a cousin of Catherine's, who has a little money of his own; he will be better able than I to look after such a big concern as that. In five years' time, please God, you will have five or six thousand head of cattle or horses down there in the

plain that they are breaking up, and it will really take a good head to look after it all."

Mme. Graslin recognized the good sense of Farrabesche's request, and granted it.

As soon as a beginning was made in the plain, Mme. Graslin fell into the even ways of a country life. She went to Mass in the morning, watched over the education of the son whom she idolized, and went to see her workmen. After dinner she was at home to her friends in the little drawing-room on the first floor of the center tower. She taught Roubaud, Clousier, and the curé whist—Gérard knew the game already—and when the party broke up towards nine o'clock, everyone went home. The only events in the pleasant life were the successes of the different parts of the great enterprise.

June came, the bed of the Gabou was dry, Gérard had taken up his quarters in the old keeper's cottage; for Farrabesche's farmhouse was finished by this time, and fifty masons, returned from Paris, were building a wall across the valley from side to side. The masonry was twenty feet thick at the base, gradually sloping away to half that thickness at the top, and the whole length of it was embedded in twelve feet of solid concrete. On the side of the valley Gérard added a course of concrete with a sloping surface twelve feet thick at the base, and a similar support on the side nearest the commons, covered with leaf-mold several feet deep, made a substantial barrier which the flood water could not break through. In case of a very wet season, Gérard contrived a channel at a suitable height for the overflow. Everywhere the masonry was carried down on the solid rock (granite, or tufa), that the water might not escape at the sides. By the middle of August the dam was finished. Meanwhile, Gérard also prepared three channels in the three principal valleys, and all of the undertakings cost less than the estimate. In this way the farm by the château could be put in working order.

The irrigation channels in the plain under Fresquin's superintendence corresponded with the natural canal at the base of the hills; all the watercourses departed thence. The

great abundance of flints enabled him to pave all the channels, and sluices were constructed so that the water might be kept at the required height in them.

Every Sunday after Mass Véronique went down through the park with Gérard and the curé, the doctor, and the mayor, to see how the system of water supply was working. The winter of 1833-1834 was very wet. The water from the three streams had been turned into the torrent, and the flood had made the valley of the Gabou into three lakes, arranged of set design one above the other, so as to form a reserve for times of great drought. In places where the valley widened out, Gérard had taken advantage of one or two knolls to make an island here and there, and to plant them with different trees. This vast engineering operation had completely altered the appearance of the landscape, but it would still be five or six years before it would take its true character.

"The land was quite naked," Farrabesche used to say, "and now madame has clothed it." After all these great changes, everyone spoke of Véronique as "madame" in the countryside. When the rains ceased in June 1834, trial was made of the irrigation system in the part of the plain where seed had been sown; and the green growth thus watered was of the same fine quality as in an Italian *marcita*, or a Swiss meadow. The method in use on farms in Lombardy had been employed; the whole surface was kept evenly moist, and the plain was as even as a carpet. The niter in the snow, dissolved in the water, doubtless contributed not a little to the fineness of the grass. Gérard hoped that the produce would be something like that of Switzerland, where, as is well known, this substance is an inexhaustible source of riches. The trees planted along the roadsides, drawing water sufficient from the ditches, made rapid progress. So it came to pass that in 1838, five years after Mme. Graslin came to Montégnac, the waste land, condemned as sterile by twenty generations, was a green and fertile plain, the whole of it under cultivation.

Gérard had built houses for five farms, besides the large one at the château; Gérard's farm, like Grossetête's and

Fresquin's, received the overflow from Mme. Graslin's estate; they were conducted on the same methods, and laid out on the same lines. Gérard built a charming lodge on his own property.

When all was finished, the township of Montégnac acted on the suggestion of its mayor, who was delighted to resign his office to Gérard, and the surveyor became mayor in his stead.

In 1840 the departure of the first herd of fat cattle sent from Montégnac to the Paris markets was an occasion for a rural fête. Cattle and horses were raised on the farms in the plain; for when the ground was cleared, seven inches of mold were usually found, which were manured by pasturing cattle on them, and continually enriched by the leaves that fell every autumn from the trees, and, first and foremost, by the melted snow-water from the reservoirs in the Gabou.

It was in this year that Mme. Graslin decided that a tutor must be found for her son, now eleven years old. She was unwilling to part with him, and yet desired to make a well-educated man of her boy. M. Bonnet wrote to the seminary. Mme. Graslin, on her side, let fall a few words concerning her wishes and her difficulty to Monseigneur Dutheil, recently appointed to an archbishopric. It was a great and serious matter to make choice of a man who must spend at least nine months out of twelve at the château. Gérard had offered already to ground his friend Francis in mathematics, but it was impossible to do without a tutor; and this choice that she must make was the more formidable to Mme. Graslin, because she knew that her health was giving way. As the value of the land in her beloved Montégnac increased, she redoubled the secret austerities of her life.

Monseigneur Dutheil, with whom Mme. Graslin still corresponded, found her the man for whom she wished. He sent a schoolmaster named Ruffin from his own diocese. Ruffin was a young man of five-and-twenty with a genius for private teaching; he was widely read; in spite of an excessive sensibility, could, when necessary, show himself sufficiently severe for the education of a child, nor was his piety



in any way prejudicial to his knowledge; finally, he was patient and pleasant-looking.

"This is a real gift which I am sending you, my dear daughter," so the Archbishop wrote; "the young man is worthy to be the tutor of a prince, so I count upon you to secure his future, for he will be your son's spiritual father."

M. Ruffin was so much liked by Mme. Graslin's little circle of faithful friends, that his coming made no change in the various intimacies of those who, grouped about their idol, seized with a sort of jealousy on the hours and moments spent with her.

The year 1843 saw the prosperity of Montégnac increasing beyond all hopes. The farm on the Gabou rivaled the farms on the plain, and the château led the way in all improvements. The five other farms, which by the terms of the lease paid an increasing rent, and would each bring in the sum of thirty thousand francs in twelve years' time, then brought in sixty thousand francs a year all told. The farmers were just beginning to reap the benefits of their self-denial and Mme. Graslin's sacrifices, and could afford to manure the meadows in the plain where the finest crops grew without fear of dry seasons. The Gabou farm paid its first rent of four thousand francs joyously.

It was in this year that a man in Montégnac started a diligence between the chief town in the arrondissement and Limoges; a coach ran either way daily. M. Clousier's nephew sold his clerkship and obtained permission to practice as a notary, and Fresquin was appointed to be tax collector in the canton. Then the new notary built himself a pretty house in Upper Montégnac, planted mulberry trees on his land, and became Gérard's deputy. And Gérard himself, grown bold with success, thought of a plan which was to bring Mme. Graslin a colossal fortune; for this year she paid off her loan, and began to receive interest from her investment in the Funds. This was Gérard's scheme: He would turn the little river into a canal, by diverting the

abundant water of the Gabou into it. This canal should effect a junction with the Vienne, and in this way it would be possible to explicit twenty thousand acres of the vast forest of Montégnac. The woods were admirably superintended by Colorat, but hitherto had brought in nothing on account of the difficulty of transport. With this arrangement it would be possible to fell a thousand acres every year (thus dividing the forest into twenty strips for successive cuttings), and the valuable timber for building purposes could be sent by water to Linoges. This had been Graslin's plan; he had scarcely listened to the curé's projects for the plain, he was far more interested in the scheme for making a canal of the little river.

## V

## VÉRONIQUE IS LAID IN THE TOMB

IN the beginning of the following year, in spite of Mme. Graslin's bearing, her friends saw warning signs that death was near. To all Roubaud's observations, as to the utmost ingenuity of the most keen-sighted questioners, Véronique gave but one answer, "She felt wonderfully well." Yet that spring, when she revisited forest and farms and her rich meadows, it was with a childlike joy that plainly spoke of sad forebodings.

Gérard had been obliged to make a low wall of concrete from the dam across the Gabou to the park at Montégnac along the base of the lower slope of the hill of the Corrèze; this had suggested an idea to him. He would inclose the whole forest of Montégnac, and throw the park into it. Mme. Graslin put by thirty thousand francs a year for this purpose. It would take seven years to complete the wall; but when it was finished, the splendid forest would be exempted from the dues claimed by the Government over uninclosed woods and lands, and the three ponds in the Gabou valley would lie within the circuit of the park. Each of the ponds, proudly dubbed "a lake," had its island. This

year, too, Gérard, in concert with Grossetête, prepared a surprise for Mme. Graslin's birthday; he had built on the second and largest island a little *Chartreuse*—a summer-house, satisfactorily rustic without, and perfectly elegant within. The old banker was in the plot, so were Farrabesche, Fresquin, and Clousier's nephew, and most of the well-to-do folk in Montégnac. Grossetête sent the pretty furniture. The bell tower, copied from the tower of Vevay, produced a charming effect in the landscape. Six boats (two for each lake) had been secretly built, rigged, and painted during the winter by Farrabesche and Guépin, with some help from the village carpenter at Montégnac.

So one morning in the middle of May, after Mme. Graslin's friends had breakfasted with her, they led her out into the park, which Gérard had managed for the last five years as architect and naturalist. It had been admirably laid out, sloping down towards the pleasant meadows in the Gabou valley, where below, on the first lake, two boats were in readiness for them. The meadowland, watered by several clear streams, had been taken in at the base of the great amphitheater at the head of the Gabou valley. The woods round about them had been carefully thinned and disposed with a view to the effect; here the shapeliest masses of trees, there a charming inlet of meadow; there was an air of loneliness about the forest-surrounded space which soothed the soul.

On a bit of rising ground by the lake Gérard had carefully reproduced the chalet which all travelers see and admire on the road to Brieg through the Rhone valley. This was to be the château, dairy, and cowshed. From the balcony there was a view over this landscape created by the engineer's art, a view comparable, since the lakes had been made, to the loveliest Swiss scenery.

It was a glorious day. Not a cloud in the blue sky, and on the earth beneath the myriad gracious chance effects that the fair May month can give. Light wreaths of mist, risen from the lake, still hung like a thin smoke about the trees by the water's edge—willows and weeping willows, ash and alder and abeles, Lombard and Canadian poplars, white and pink hawthorn, birch and acacia, had been grouped about

the lake, as the nature of the ground and the trees themselves (all finely-grown specimens now ten years old) suggested. The high green wall of forest trees was reflected in the sheet of water, clear as a mirror, and serene as the sky; their topmost crests, clearly outlined in that limpid atmosphere, stood out in contrast with the thickets below them, veiled in delicate green undergrowth. The lakes, divided by strongly-built embankments with a causeway along them that served as a short cut from side to side of the valley, lay like three mirrors, each with a different reflecting surface, the water trickling from one to another in musical cascades. And beyond this, from the chalet you caught a glimpse of the bleak and barren common lands, the pale chalky soil (seen from the balcony) looked like a wide sea, and supplied a contrast with the fresh greenery about the lake. Véronique saw the gladness in her friends' faces as their hands were held out to assist her to enter the larger boat, tears rose to her eyes, and they rowed on in silence until they reached the first causeway. Here they landed, to embark again on the second lake; and Véronique, looking up, saw the summer-house on the island, and Grossetête and his family sitting on a bench before it.

"They are determined to make me regret life, it seems," she said, turning to the curé.

"We want to keep you among us," Clousier said.

"There is no putting life into the dead," she answered; but at M. Bonnet's look of rebuke, she withdrew into herself again.

"Simply let me have the charge of your health," pleaded Roubaud in a gentle voice; "I am sure that I could preserve her who is the living glory of the canton, the common bond that unites the lives of all our friends."

Véronique bent her head, while Gérard rowed slowly out towards the island in the middle of the sheet of water, the largest of the three. The upper lake chanced to be too full; the distant murmur of the weir seemed to find a voice for the lovely landscape.

"You did well indeed to bring me here to bid farewell to this entrancing view!" she said, as she saw the beauty

of the trees so full of leaves that they hid the bank on either side.

The only sign of disapprobation which Véronique's friends permitted themselves was a gloomy silence; and, at a second glance from M. Bonnet, she sprang lightly from the boat with an apparent gayety, which she sustained. Once more she became the lady of the manor, and so charming was she, that the Grossetête family thought that they saw in her the beautiful Mme. Graslin of old days.

"Assuredly, you may live yet," her mother said in Véronique's ear.

On that pleasant festival day, in the midst of a scene sublimely transformed by the use of Nature's own resources, how should anything wound Véronique? Yet then and there she received her death-blow.

It had been arranged that the party should return home towards nine o'clock by way of the meadows; for the roads, quite as fine as any in England or Italy, were the pride of their engineer. There were flints in abundance; as the stones were taken off the land they had been piled in heaps by the roadside; and with such plenty of road metal, it was so easy to keep the ways in good order, that in five years' time they were in a manner macadamized. Carriages were waiting for the party at the lower end of the valley nearest the plain, almost under the Living Rock. The horses had all been bred in Montégnac. Their trial formed part of the programme for the day; for these were the first that were ready for sale, the manager of the stud having just sent ten of them up to the stables of the château. Four handsome animals in light and plain harness were to draw Mme. Graslin's calèche, a present from Grossetête.

After dinner the joyous company went to take coffee on a promontory where a little wooden kiosk had been erected, a copy of one on the shores of the Bosphorus. From this point there was a wide outlook over the lowest lake, stretching away to the great barrier across the Gabou, now covered thickly with a luxuriant growth of green, a charming spot for the eyes to rest upon. Colorat's house and the old cottage, now restored, were the only buildings in the land-

scape; Colorat's capacities were scarcely adequate for the difficult post of head forester in Montégnac, so he had succeeded to Farrabesche's office.

From this point M<sup>me</sup>. Graslin fancied that she could see Francis near Farrabesche's nursery of saplings; she looked for the child, and could not find him, till M. Ruffin pointed him out, playing on the brink of the lake with M. Grossetête's great-grandchildren. Véronique felt afraid that some accident might happen, and without listening to remonstrances, sprang into one of the boats, landed on the causeway, and herself hurried away in search of her son. This little incident broke up the party on the island. Grossetête, now a venerable great-grandfather, was the first to suggest a walk along the beautiful field path that wound up and down by the side of the lower lakes.

M<sup>me</sup>. Graslin saw Francis a long way off. He was with a woman in mourning, who had thrown her arms about him. She seemed to be from a foreign country, judging by her dress and the shape of her hat. Véronique in dismay called her son to her.

"Who is that woman?" she asked of the other children; "and why did Francis go away from you?"

"The lady called him by his name," said one of the little girls. M<sup>me</sup>. Sauviat and Gérard, who were ahead of the others, came up at that moment.

"Who is that woman, dear?" said M<sup>me</sup>. Graslin, turning to Francis.

"I do not know," he said, "but no one kisses me like that except you and grandmamma. She was crying," he added in his mother's ear.

"Shall I run and fetch her?" asked Gérard.

"No!" said M<sup>me</sup>. Graslin, with a curtness very unusual with her.

With kindly tact, which Véronique appreciated, Gérard took the little ones with him and went back to meet the others; so that M<sup>me</sup>. Sauviat, M<sup>me</sup>. Graslin, and Francis were left together.

"What did she say to you?" asked M<sup>me</sup>. Sauviat, addressing her grandson.

"I don't know. She did not speak French."

"Did you not understand anything she said?" asked Véronique.

"Oh yes; one thing she said over and over again, that is how I can remember it—*dear brother!* she said."

Véronique leant on her mother's arm and took her child's hand, but she could scarcely walk, and her strength failed her.

"What is it? . . . What has happened?" . . . everyone asked of Mme. Sauviat.

A cry broke from the old Auvergnate: "Oh! my daughter is in danger!" she exclaimed, in her guttural accent and deep voice.

Mme. Graslin had to be carried to her carriage. She ordered Aline to keep beside Francis, and beckoned to Gérard.

"You have been in England, I believe," she said, when she had recovered herself; "do you understand English? What do these words mean—*dear brother?*"

"That is very simple," said Gérard, and he explained.

Véronique exchanged glances with Aline and Mme. Sauviat; the two women shuddered, but controlled their feelings. Mme. Graslin sank into a torpor from which nothing roused her; she did not heed the gleeful voices as the carriages started, nor the splendor of the sunset light on the meadows, the even pace of the horses, nor the laughter of the friends who followed them on horseback at a gallop. Her mother bade the man drive faster, and her carriage was the first to reach the château. When the rest arrived they were told that Véronique had gone to her room, and would see no one.

"I am afraid that Mme. Graslin must have received a fatal wound," Gérard began, speaking to his friends.

"Where? . . . How?" asked they.

"In the heart," answered Gérard.

Two days later Roubaud set out for Paris. He had seen that Mme. Graslin's life was in danger, and to save her he had gone to summon the first doctor in Paris to give his opinion of the case. But Véronique had only consented to see Roubaud to put an end to the importunities of Aline and her mother, who begged her to be more careful of herself;

she knew that she was dying. She declined to see M. Bonnet, saying that the time had not yet come; and although all the friends who had come from Limoges for her birthday festival were anxious to stay with her, she entreated them to pardon her if she could not fulfill the duties of hospitality, but she needed the most profound solitude. So, after Roubaud's sudden departure, the guests left the château of Montégnae and went back to Limoges, not so much in disappointment as in despair, for all who had come with Grossetête adored Véronique, and were utterly at a loss as to the cause of this mysterious disaster.

One evening, two days after Grossetête's large family party had left the château, Aline brought a visitor to Mme. Graslin's room. It was Catherine Farrabesche. At first Catherine stood glued to the spot, so astonished was she at this sudden change in her mistress, the features so drawn.

"Good God! madame, what harm that poor girl has done! If only we could have known, Farrabesche and I, we would never have taken her in. She has just heard that madame is ill, and sent me to tell Mme. Sauviat that she should like to speak to her."

"*Here!*" cried Véronique. "Where is she at this moment?"

"My husband took her over to the chalet."

"Good," said Mme. Graslin; "leave us, and tell Farrabesche to go. Tell the lady to wait, and my mother will go to see her."

At nightfall Véronique, leaning on her mother's arm, crept slowly across the park to the chalet. The moon shone with its most brilliant glory, the night air was soft; the two women, both shaken with emotion that they could not conceal, received in some sort the encouragement of Nature. From moment to moment Mme. Sauviat stopped and made her daughter rest; for Véronique's sufferings were so poignant that it was nearly midnight before they reached the path that turned down through the wood to the meadows, where the chalet roof sparkled like silver. The moonlight on the surface of the still water lent it a pearly hue. The faint



noises of the night, which travel so far in the silence, made up a delicate harmony of sound.

Véronique sat down on the bench outside the chalet in the midst of the glorious spectacle beneath the starry skies. The murmur of two voices and footfalls on the sands made by two persons still some distance away was borne to her by the water, which transmits every sound in the stillness as faithfully as it reflects everything in its calm surface. There was an exquisite quality in the intonation of one of the voices, by which Véronique recognized the curé, and with the rustle of his cassock was blended the light sound of a silk dress. Evidently there was a woman.

"Let us go in," she said to her mother. Mme. Sauviat and Véronique sat down on a manger in the low, large room built for a cowshed.

"I am not blaming you at all, my child," the curé was saying; "but you may be the cause of an irreparable misfortune, for she is the life and soul of this countryside."

"Oh, monsieur! I will go to-night," the stranger woman's voice answered; "but—I can say this to you—it will be like death to me to leave my country a second time. If I had stayed a day longer in that horrible New York or in the United States, where there is neither hope nor faith nor charity, I should have died, without any illness. The air I was breathing hurt my chest, the food did me no good, I was dying though I looked full of life and health. When I stepped on board the suffering ceased; I felt as if I were in France. Ah, monsieur! I have seen my mother and my brother's wife die of grief. And then my grandfather and grandmother Tascheron died—died, dear M. Bonnet, in spite of the unheard-of prosperity of Tascheronville. . . . Yes. Our father began a settlement, a village in Ohio, and now the village is almost a town. One-third of the land thereabouts belongs to our family, for God has watched over us all along, and the farms have done well, our crops are magnificent, and we are rich—so rich that we managed to build a Catholic church. The whole town is Catholic; we will not allow any other worship, and we hope to convert all the endless sects about us by our example. The true faith

is in a minority in that dreary mercenary land of the dollar, a land which chills one to the soul. Still I would go back to die there sooner than do the least harm here or give the slightest pain to the mother of our dear Francis. Only take me to the parsonage house to-night, dear M. Bonnet, so that I can pray awhile *on his* grave, it was just that that drew me here, for as I came nearer and nearer the place where *he* lies I felt quite a different being. No, I did not believe I should feel so happy here——”

“Very well,” said the curé; “come, let us go. If at some future day you can come back without evil consequences, I will write to tell you, Denise; but perhaps after this visit to your old home you may feel able to live yonder without suffering——”

“Leave this country now when it is so beautiful here! Just see what Mme. Graslin has made of the Gabou!” she added, pointing to the moonlit lake. “And then all this will belong to our dear Francis——”

“You shall not go, Denise,” said Mme. Graslin, appearing in the stable doorway.

Jean-François Tascheron’s sister clasped her hands at the sight of this ghost who spoke to her; for Véronique’s white face in the moonlight looked unsubstantial as a shadow against the dark background of the open stable door. Her eyes glittered like two stars.

“No, child, you shall not leave the country you have traveled so far to see, and you shall be happy here, unless God should refuse to second my efforts; for God, no doubt, has sent you here, Denise.”

She took the astonished girl’s hand in hers, and went with her down the path towards the opposite shore of the lake. Mme. Sauviat and the curé, left alone, sat down on the bench.

“Let her have her way,” murmured Mme. Sauviat.

A few minutes later Véronique returned alone; her mother and the curé brought her back to the château. Doubtless she had thought of some plan of action which suited the mystery, for nobody saw Denise, no one knew that she had come back.

Mme. Graslin took to her bed, nor did she leave it. Every day she grew worse. It seemed to vex her that she could not rise, for again and again she made vain efforts to get up and take a walk in the park. One morning in early June, some days after that night at the chalet, she made a violent effort and rose and tried to dress herself, as if for a festival. She begged Gérard to lend her his arm; for her friends came daily for news of her, and when Aline said that her mistress meant to go out they all hurried up to the château. Mme. Graslin had summoned all her remaining strength to spend it on this last walk. She gained her object by a violent spasmodic effort of the will, inevitably followed by a deadly reaction.

"Let us go to the chalet—and alone," she said to Gérard. The tones of her voice were soft, and there was something like coquetry in her glance. "This is my last escapade, for I dreamed last night that the doctors had come."

"Would you like to see your woods?" asked Gérard.

"For the last time. But," she added, in coaxing tones, "I have some strange proposals to make to you."

Gérard, by her direction, rowed her across the second lake, when she had reached it on foot. He was at a loss to understand such a journey, but she indicated the summer-house as their destination, and he plied his oars.

There was a long pause. Her eyes wandered over the hillsides, the water, and the sky; then she spoke—

"My friend, it is a strange request that I am about to make to you, but I think that you are the man to obey me."

"In everything," he said, "sure as I am that you cannot will anything but good."

"I want you to marry," she said; "you will fulfill the wishes of a dying woman, who is certain that she is securing your happiness."

"I am too ugly!" said Gérard.

"*She* is pretty, she is young, she wants to live in Montégnaç; and if you marry her, you will do something towards making my last moments easier. We need not discuss her qualities. I tell you this, that she is a woman of a thousand;

and as for her charms, youth, and beauty, the first sight will suffice, we shall see her in a moment in the summer-house. On our way back you shall give me your answer, a 'Yes' or a 'No,' in sober earnest."

Mme. Graslin smiled as she saw the cars move more swiftly after this confidence. Denise, who was living out of sight in the island sanctuary, saw Mme. Graslin, and hurried to the door. Véronique and Gérard came in. In spite of herself, the poor girl flushed as she met the eyes that Gérard turned upon her; Denise's beauty was an agreeable surprise to him.

"La Curieux does not let you want for anything, does she?" asked Véronique.

"Look, madame," said Denise, pointing to the breakfast table.

"This is M. Gérard, of whom I have spoken to you," Véronique went on. "He will be my son's guardian, and when I am dead you will all live together at the château until Francis comes of age."

"Oh, madame! don't talk like that."

"Just look at me, child!" said Véronique, and all at once she saw tears in the girl's eyes.—"She comes from New York," she added, turning to Gérard.

This by way of putting both on a footing of acquaintance. Gérard asked questions of Denise, and Mme. Graslin left them to chat, going to look out over the view of the last lake on the Gabou. At six o'clock Gérard and Véronique rowed back to the chalet.

"Well?" queried she, looking at her friend.

"You have my word."

"You may be without prejudices," Véronique began, "but you ought to know how it was that she was obliged to leave the country, poor child, brought back by a homesick longing."

"A slip?"

"Oh no," said Véronique, "or should I introduce her to you? She is the sister of a workingman who died on the scaffold . . ."

"Oh! Tascheron, who murdered old Pingret——"

"Yes. She is a murderer's sister," said Mme. Graslin, with inexpressible irony in her voice; "you can take back your word."

She went no further. Gérard was compelled to carry her to the bench at the chalet, and for some minutes she lay there unconscious. Gérard, kneeling beside her, said, as soon as she opened her eyes—

"I will marry Denise."

Mme. Graslin made him rise, she took his head in her hands, and set a kiss on his forehead. Then, seeing that he was astonished to be thus thanked, she grasped his hand and said—

"You will soon know the meaning of this puzzle. Let us try to reach the terrace again, our friends are there. It is very late, and I feel very weak, and yet, I should like to bid farewell from afar to this dear plain of mine."

The weather had been intolerably hot all day; and though the storms, which did so much damage that year in different parts of Europe and in France itself, respected the Limousin, there had been thunder along the Loire, and the air began to grow fresher. The sky was so pure that the least details on the horizon were sharp and clear. What words can describe the delicious concert of sounds, the smothered hum of the township, now alive with workers returning from the fields? It would need the combined work of a great landscape painter and a painter of figures to do justice to such a picture. Is there not, in fact, a subtle connection between the lassitude of Nature and the laborer's weariness, an affinity of mood hardly to be rendered? In the tepid twilight of the dog days, the rarefied air gives its full significance to the least sound made by every living thing.

The women sit chatting at their doors with a bit of work even then in their hands, as they wait for the goodman who, probably, will bring the children home. The smoke going up from the roofs is the sign of the last meal of the day and the gayest for the peasants; after it they will sleep. The stir at that hour is the expression of happy and tranquil thoughts in those who have finished their day's work. There

is a very distinct difference between their evening and morning snatches of song; for in this the village folk are like the birds, the last twitterings at night are utterly unlike their notes at dawn. All Nature joins in the hymn of rest at the end of the day, as in the hymn of gladness at sunrise; all things take the softly blended hues that the sunset throws across the fields, tinging the dusty roads with mellow light. If any should be bold enough to deny the influences of the fairest hour of the day, the very flowers would convict him of falsehood, intoxicating him with their subtlest scents, mingled with the tenderest sounds of insects the amorous faint twitter of birds.

Thin films of mist hovered above the "water-lanes" that furrowed the plain below the township. The poplars and acacias and sumach trees, planted in equal numbers along the roads, had grown so tall already that they shaded it, and in the wide fields on either side the large and celebrated herds of cattle were scattered about in groups, some still browsing, others chewing the cud. Men, women, and children were busy getting in the last of the hay, the most picturesque of all field work. The evening air, less languid since the sudden breath of coolness after the storms, bore the wholesome scents of mown grass and swathes of hay. The least details in the beautiful landscape stood out perfectly sharp and clear.

There was some fear for the weather. The ricks were being finished in all haste; men hurried about them with loaded forks, raked the heaps together, and loaded the carts. Out in the distance the scythes were still busy, the women were turning the long swathes that looked like hatched lines across the fields into dotted rows of haycocks.

Sounds of laughter came up from the hayfields, the workers frolicked over their work, the children shouted as they buried each other in the heaps. Every figure was distinct, the women's petticoats, pink, red, or blue, their kerchiefs, their bare arms and legs, the wide-brimmed straw hats of field-workers, the men's shirts, the white trousers that nearly all of them wore.

The last rays of sunlight fell like a bright dust over the

long lines of poplar trees by the channels which divided up the plain into fields of various sizes, and lingered caressingly over the groups of men, women, and children, horses and carts and cattle. The shepherds and herdsmen began to gather their flocks together with the sound of their horns. The plain seemed so silent and so full of sound, a strange antithesis, but only strange to those who do not know the splendors of the fields. Loads of green fodder came into the township from every side. There was something indescribably somnolent in the influence of the scene, and Véronique, between the curé and Gérard, uttered no word.

At last they came to a gap made by a rough track that led from the houses ranged below the terrace to the parsonage house and the church; and looking down into Montégnac, Gérard and M. Bonnet saw the upturned faces of the women, men, and children, all looking at them. Doubtless it was Mme. Graslin more particularly whom they followed with their eyes. And what affection and gratitude there was in their way of doing this! With what blessings did they not greet Véronique's appearance! With what devout intentness they watched the three benefactors of a whole countryside! It was as if man added a hymn of gratitude to all the songs of evening. While Mme. Graslin walked with her eyes set on the magnificent distant expanse of green, her dearest creation, the mayor and the curé watched the groups below. There was no mistake about their expression; grief, melancholy, and regret, mingled with hope, were plainly visible in them all. There was not a soul in Montégnac but knew how that M. Roubaud had gone to Paris to fetch some great doctors, and that the beneficent lady of the canton was nearing the end of a fatal illness. On market days in every place for thirty miles around, the peasants asked the Montégnac folk, "How is your mistress?" And so, the great thought of death hovered over this countryside amid the fair picture of the hayfields.

Far off in the plain, more than one mower sharpening his scythe, more than one girl leaning on her rake, or farmer among his stacks of hay, looked up and paused thoughtfully to watch Mme. Graslin, their great lady, the pride of the

Corrèze. They tried to discover some hopeful sign, or watched her admiringly, prompted by a feeling which put work out of their minds. "She is out of doors, so she must be better!" The simple phrase was on all lips.

Mme. Graslin's mother was sitting at the end of the terrace. Véronique had placed a cast-iron garden-seat in the corner, so that she might sit there and look down into the churchyard through the balustrade. Mme. Sauviat watched her daughter as she walked along the terrace, and her eyes filled with tears. She knew something of the preternatural effort which Véronique was making; she knew that even at that moment her daughter was suffering fearful pain, and that it was only a heroic effort of will that enabled her to stand. Tears, almost like tears of blood, found their way down among the sunburned wrinkles of a face like parchment, that seemed as if it could not alter one crease for any emotion any more. Little Graslin, standing between M. Ruffin's knees, cried for sympathy.

"What is the matter, child?" the tutor asked sharply.

"Grandmamma is crying——"

M. Ruffin's eyes had been fixed on Mme. Graslin, who was coming towards them; he looked at Mme. Sauviat; the Roman matron's face, stony with sorrow and wet with tears, gave him a great shock. That dumb grief had invested the old woman with a certain grandeur and sacredness.

"Madame, why did you let her go out?" asked the tutor.

Véronique was coming nearer. She walked like a queen, with admirable grace in her whole bearing. And Mme. Sauviat knew that she should outlive her daughter, and in the cry of despair that broke from her, a secret escaped that revealed many things which roused curiosity.

"To think of it! She walks and wears a horrible hair shirt always prickling her skin!"

The young man's blood ran cold at her words; he could not be insensible to the exquisite grace of Véronique's movements, and shuddered as he thought of the cruel, unrelenting mastery that the soul must have gained over the body. A Parisienne famed for her graceful figure, the ease of her



carriage and bearing, might perhaps have feared comparison with Véronique at that moment.

"She has worn it for thirteen years, ever since the child was weaned," the old woman said, pointing to young Graslin. "She has worked miracles here; and if they but knew her life, they might put her among the saints. Nobody has seen her eat since she came here, do you know why? Aline brings her a bit of dry bread three times a day on a great platter full of ashes, and vegetables cooked in water without any salt, on a red earthenware dish that they put a dog's food in! Yes. That is the way she lives who has given life to the canton.—She says her prayers kneeling on the hem of her cilice. She says that if she did not practice these austerities, she could not wear the smiling face you see.—I am telling you this" (and the old woman's voice dropped lower) "for you to tell it to the doctor that M. Roubaud has gone to fetch from Paris. If he will prevent my daughter from continuing these penances, they might save her yet (who knows?) though the hand of death is on her head. Look! Ah, I must be very strong to have borne all these things for fifteen years."

The old woman took her grandson's hand, raised it, and passed it over her forehead and cheeks as if some restorative balm communicated itself in the touch of the little hand; then she set a kiss upon it, a kiss full of the love which is the secret of grandmothers no less than mothers. By this time Véronique was only a few paces distant, Clousier was with her, and the curé and Gérard. Her face, lit up by the setting sun, was radiant with awful beauty.

One thought, steadfast amid many inward troubles, seemed to be written in the lines that furrowed the sallow forehead in long folds piled one above the other like clouds. The outlines of her face, now completely colorless, entirely white with the dead olive-tinged whiteness of plants grown without sunlight, were thin but not withered, and showed traces of great physical suffering produced by mental anguish. She had quelled the body through the soul, and the soul through the body. So completely worn out was she, that she resembled her past self only as an old woman resembles her portrait

painted in girlhood. The glowing expression of her eyes spoke of the absolute domination of a Christian will over a body reduced to the subjection required by religion, for in this woman the flesh was at the mercy of the spirit. As in profane poetry Achilles dragged the dead body of Hector, victoriously she dragged it over the stony ways of life; and thus for fifteen years she had compassed the heavenly Jerusalem which she hoped to enter, not as a thief, but amid triumphant acclamations. Never was anchorite amid the parched and arid deserts of Africa more master of his senses than Véronique in her splendid château in a rich land of soft and luxuriant landscape, nestling under the mantle of the great forest where science, heir to Moses' rod, had caused plenty to spring forth and the prosperity and the welfare of a whole countryside. Véronique was looking out over the results of twelve years of patience, on the accomplishment of a task on which a man of ability might have prided himself; but with the gentle modesty which Pontorno's brush depicted in the expression of his symbolical *Christian Chastity*—with her arms about the unicorn. Her two companions respected her silent mood when they saw that she was gazing over the vast plain, once sterile, and now fertile; the devout lady of the manor went with folded arms and eyes fixed on the point where the road reached the horizon.

Suddenly she stopped when but two paces away from Mme. Sauviat, who watched her as Christ's mother must have gazed at her Son upon the Cross. Véronique raised her hand and pointed to the spot where the road turned off to Montégnac.

"Do you see that calèche and the four post-horses?" she asked, smiling. "That is M. Roubaud. He is coming back. We shall soon know now how many hours I have to live."

"*Hours!*" echoed Gérard.

"Did I not tell you that this was my last walk?" she said. "Did I not come to see this beautiful view in all its glory for the last time?"

She indicated the fair meadow-land, lit up by the last rays

of the sun, and the township below. All the village had come out and stood in the square in front of the church.

"Ah," she went on, "let me think that there is God's benediction in the strange atmospheric conditions that have favored our hay harvest. Storms all about us, rain and hail and thunder have laid waste pitilessly and incessantly, but not here. The people think so; why should not I follow their example? I need so much to find some good augury on earth for that which awaits me when my eyes shall be closed!"

Her child came to her, took his mother's hand, and laid it on his hair. The great eloquence of that movement touched Véronique; with preternatural strength she caught him up, held him on her left arm a moment as she used to hold him as a child at the breast, and kissed him. "Do you see this land, my boy?" she said. "You must go on with your mother's work when you are a man."

Then the curé spoke sadly: "There are a very few strong and privileged natures who are permitted to see Death face to face, to fight a long duel with him, and to show courage and skill that strike others with admiration; this is the dreadful spectacle that you give us, madame; but, perhaps, you are somewhat wanting in pity for us. Leave us at least the hope that you are mistaken, that God will permit you to finish all that you have begun."

"I have done nothing save through you, my friends," said she. "It was in my power to be useful to you; it is so no longer. Everything about us is green; there is no desolate waste here now, save my own heart. You know it, dear curé, you know that I can only find peace and pardon *there*——"

She held out her hand over the churchyard. She had never said so much since the day when she first came to Montégnac and fainted away on that very spot. The curé gazed at his penitent; and, accustomed as he had been for long to read her thoughts, he knew from those simple words that he had won a fresh victory. It must have cost Véronique a terrible effort over herself to break a twelve years' silence with such pregnant words; and the curé clasped his hands

with the devout fervor familiar to him, and looked with deep religious emotion on the family group about him. All their secrets had passed through his heart.

Gérard looked bewildered; the words "peace and pardon" seemed to sound strangely in his ears; M. Ru<sup>st</sup>in's eyes were fixed in a sort of dull amazement on Mme. Graslin. And meanwhile the calèche sped rapidly along the road, threading its way from tree to tree.

"There are five of them!" said the curé, who could see and count the travelers.

"Five!" exclaimed M. Gérard. "Will five of them know more than two?"

"Ah!" murmured Mme. Graslin, who leant on the curé's arm, "there is the public prosecutor. What does he come to do here?"

"And papa Grossetête too!" cried Francis.

"Madame, take courage, be worthy of yourself," said the curé. He drew Mme. Graslin, who was leaning heavily on him, a few paces aside.

"What does he want?" she said for all answer, and she went to lean against the balustrade—"Mother!"

Mme. Sauviat sprang forward with an activity that belied her years.

"I shall see him again . . ." said Véronique.

"If he is coming with M. Grossetête," said the curé, "it can only be with good intentions, of course."

"Ah! sir, my daughter is dying!" cried Mme. Sauviat, seeing the change that passed over Mme. Graslin's face at the words. "How will she endure such cruel agitations? M. Grossetête has always prevented that man from coming to see Véronique——"

Véronique's face flamed.

"So you hate him, do you?" the Abbé Bonnet asked, turning to his penitent.

"She left Limoges lest all Limoges should know her secrets," said Mme. Sauviat, terrified by that sudden change wrought in Mme. Graslin's drawn features.

"Do you not see that his presence will poison the hours that remain to me, when heaven alone should be in my

thoughts? He is nailing me down to earth!" cried Véronique.

The curé took Mme. Graslin's arm once more, and constrained her to walk a few paces; when they were alone, he looked full at her with one of those angelic looks which calm the most violent tumult in the soul.

"If it is thus," he said, "I, as your confessor, bid you to receive him, to be kind and gracious to him, to lay aside this garment of anger, and to forgive him as God will forgive you. Can there be a taint of passion in the soul that I deemed purified? Burn this last grain of incense on the altar of penitence, lest all shall be one lie in you."

"There was still this last struggle to make, and it is made," she said, drying her eyes. "The evil one was lurking in the last recess in my heart, and doubtless it was God who put into M. de Granville's heart the thought that sends him here. How many times will He smite me yet?" she cried.

She stopped as if to put up an inward prayer; then she turned to Mme. Sauviat, and said in a low voice—

"Mother dear, be nice and kind to M. le Procureur Général."

In spite of herself, the old Auvergnate shuddered feverishly.

"There is no hope left," she said, as she caught at the curé's hand.

As she spoke, the cracking of the postilion's whip announced that the calèche was climbing the avenue; the great gateway stood open, the carriage turned in the courtyard, and in another moment the travelers came out upon the terrace. Beside the public prosecutor and M. Grossetête, the Archbishop had come (M. Dutheil was in Limoges for Gabriel de Rastignac's consecration as bishop), and M. Roubaud came arm in arm with Horace Bianchon, one of the greatest doctors in Paris.

"You are welcome," said Véronique, addressing her guests, "and *you*" (holding out a hand to the public prosecutor and grasping his) "especially welcome."

M. Grossetête, the Archbishop, and Mme. Sauviat exchanged glances at this; so great was their astonishment, that it overcame the profound discretion of old age.

"And I thank him who brought you here," Véronique went on, as she looked on the Comte de Granville's face for the first time in fifteen years. "I have borne you a grudge for a long time, but now I know that I have done you an injustice; you shall know the reason of all this if you will stay here in Montégnac for two days."—She turned to Horace Bianchon—"This gentleman will confirm my apprehension, no doubt."—Then to the Archbishop—"It is God surely who sends you to me, my lord," she said with a bow. "For our old friendship's sake you will not refuse to be with me in my last moments. By what grace, I wonder, have I all those who have loved me and sustained me all my life about me now?"

At the word "loved" she turned with graceful, deliberate intent towards M. de Granville; the kindness in her manner brought tears into his eyes. There was a deep silence. The two doctors asked themselves what witchcraft it was that enabled the woman before them to stand upright while enduring the agony which she must suffer. The other three were so shocked at the change that illness had wrought in her that they could only communicate their thoughts by the eyes.

"Permit me to go with these gentlemen," she said, with her unvarying grace of manner; "it is an urgent question." She took leave of her guests, and, leaning upon the two doctors, went towards the château so slowly and painfully that it was evident that the end was at hand.

The Archbishop looked at the curé.

"M. Bonnet," he said, "you have worked wonders!"

"Not I, but God, my lord," answered the other.

"They said that she was dying," exclaimed M. Grossetête; "why, she is dead! There is nothing left but a spirit——"

"A soul," said M. Gérard.

"She is the same as ever," cried the public prosecutor.

"She is a Stoic after the manner of the old Greek Zeno," said the tutor.

Silently they went along the terrace and looked out over the landscape that glowed a most glorious red color in the light shed abroad by the fires of the sunset.

"It is thirteen years since I saw this before," said the Archbishop, indicating the fertile fields, the valley, and the hill above Montégnac, "so for me this miracle is as extraordinary as another which I have just witnessed; for how can you let Mme. Graslin stand upright? She ought to be lying in bed——"

"So she was," said Mme. Sauviat. "She never left her bed for ten days, but she was determined to get up to see this place for the last time."

"I understand," said M. de Granville. "She wished to say farewell to all that she had called into being, but she ran the risk of dying here on the terrace."

"M. Roubaud said that she was not to be thwarted," said Mme. Sauviat.

"What a marvelous thing!" exclaimed the Archbishop, whose eyes never wearied of wandering over the view. "She has made the waste into sown fields. But we know, monsieur," he added, turning to Gérard, "that your skill and your labors have been a great factor in this."

"We have only been her laborers," the mayor said.

"Yes; we are only the hands, she was the head."

Mme. Sauviat left the group, and went to hear what the opinion of the doctor from Paris was.

"We shall stand in need of heroism to be present at this deathbed," said the public prosecutor, addressing the Archbishop and the curé.

"Yes," said M. Grossetête; "but for such a friend, great things should be done."

While they waited and came and went, oppressed by heavy thoughts, two of Mme. Graslin's tenants came up. They had come, they said, on behalf of a whole township waiting in painful suspense to hear the verdict of the doctor from Paris.

"They are in consultation; we know nothing as yet, my friends," said the Archbishop.

M. Roubaud came hurrying towards them, and at the

sound of his quick footsteps the others hastened to meet him.

"Well?" asked the mayor.

"She has not forty-eight hours to live," answered M. Roubaud. "The disease has developed while I was away. M. Bianchon cannot understand how she could walk. These seldom seen phenomena are always the result of great exaltation of mind.—And so, gentlemen," he added, speaking to the churchmen, "she has passed out of our hands and into yours; science is powerless; my illustrious colleague thinks that there is scarcely time for the ceremonies of the Church."

"Let us put up the prayers appointed for times of great calamity," said the curé, and he went away with his parishioners. "His lordship will no doubt condescend to administer the last sacraments."

The Archbishop bowed his head in reply; he could not say a word, his eyes were full of tears. The group sat down or leant against the balustrade, and each was deep in his own thoughts. The church bells pealed mournfully, the sound of many footsteps came up from below, the whole village was flocking to the service. The light of the altar candles gleamed through the trees in M. Bonnet's garden, and then began the sounds of chanting. A faintly flushed twilight overspread the fields, the birds had ceased to sing, and the only sound in the plain was the shrill, melancholy, long-drawn note of the frogs.

"Let us do our duty," said the Archbishop at last, and he went slowly towards the house, like a man who carries a burden greater than he can bear.

The consultation had taken place in the great drawing-room, a vast apartment which communicated with a state bedroom, draped with crimson damask. Here Graslin had exhibited to the full the self-made man's taste for display. Véronique had not entered the room half a dozen times in fourteen years; the great suite of apartments was completely useless to her; she had never received visitors in them, but the effort she had made to discharge her last obligations and to quell her revolted physical nature had left her powerless to reach her own rooms.



The great doctor had taken his patient's hand and felt her pulse, then he looked significantly at M. Roubaud, and the two men carried her into the adjoining room and laid her on the bed, Aline hastily flinging open the doors for them. There were, of course, no sheets on the state bed; the two doctors laid Mme. Graslin at full length on the crimson quilt, Roubaud opened the windows, flung back the Venetian shutters, and summoned help. La Sauviat and the servants came hurrying to the room; they lighted the wax candles (yellow with age) in the sconces.

Then the dying woman smiled. "It is decreed that my death shall be a festival, as a Christian's death should be."

During the consultation she spoke again—

"The public prosecutor has done his work; I was going; he has dispatched me sooner——"

The old mother laid a finger on her lips with a warning glance.

"Mother, I will speak now," Véronique said in answer. "Look! the finger of God is in all this; I shall die very soon in this room hung with red . . ."

La Sauviat went out in dismay at the words.

"Aline!" she cried, "she is speaking out!——"

"Ah! madame's mind is wandering," said the faithful waiting-woman, coming in with the sheets. "Send for M. le Curé, madame."

"You must undress your mistress," said Bianchon, as soon as Aline entered the room.

"It will be very difficult; madame wears a hair shirt next her skin."

"What?" the great doctor cried, "are such horrors still practiced in this nineteenth century?"

"Mme. Graslin has never allowed me to touch the stomach," said M. Roubaud. "I could learn nothing of her complaint save from her face and her pulse, and from what I could learn from her mother and her maid."

Véronique was laid on a sofa while they made the great bed ready for her at the further end of the room. The doctors spoke together with lowered voices as La Sauviat and Aline made the bed. There was a look terrible to see

in the two women's faces; the same thought was wringing both their hearts. "We are making her bed for the last time—this will be her bed of death."

The consultation was brief. In the first place, Bianchon insisted that Aline and La Sauviat must cut the patient out of the cilice and put her in a nightdress. The two doctors waited in the great drawing-room while this was done. Aline came out with the terrible instrument of penance wrapped in a towel. "Madame is just one wound," she told them.

"Madame, you have a stronger will than Napoleon had," said Bianchon, when the two doctors had come in again, and Véronique had given clear answers to the questions put to her. "You are preserving your faculties in the last stage of a disease in which the Emperor's brilliant intellect sank. From what I know of you, I feel that I owe it to you to tell you the truth."

"I implore you, with clasped hands, to tell it me," she said; "you can measure the strength that remains in me, and I have need of all the life that is in me for a few hours yet."

"You must think of nothing but your salvation," said Bianchon.

"If God grants that body and mind die together," she said, with a divinely sweet smile, "believe that the favor is vouchsafed for the glory of His Church on earth. My mind is still needed to carry out a thought from God, while Napoleon had accomplished his destiny."

The two doctors looked at each other in amazement; the words were spoken as easily as if Mme. Graslin had been in her drawing-room.

"Ah! here is the doctor who will heal me," she added as the Archbishop entered.

She summoned all her strength to sit upright to take leave of M. Bianchon, speaking graciously, and asking him to accept something besides money for the good news which he had just brought her; then she whispered a few words to her mother, who went out with the doctor. She asked the Archbishop to wait until the curé should come, and seemed to wish to rest for a little while. Aline sat by her mistress's bedside.

At midnight Mme. Graslin woke and asked for the Archbishop and the curé. Aline told her that they were in the room engaged in prayer for her. With a sign she dismissed her mother and the maid, and beckoned the two priests to her bed.

“Nothing of what I shall say is unknown to you, my lord, nor to you, M. le Curé. You, my Lord Archbishop, were the first to look into my conscience; at a glance you read almost the whole past, and that which you saw was enough for you. My confessor, an angel sent by Heaven to be near me, knows something more; I have confessed all to him, as in duty bound. And now I wish to consult you—whose minds are enlightened by the spirit of the Church; I want to ask you how such a woman as I should take leave of this life as a true Christian. You, spirits holy and austere, do you think that if Heaven vouchsafes pardon to the most complete and profound repentance ever made by a guilty soul, I shall have accomplished my whole task here on earth?”

“Yes; yes, my daughter,” said the Archbishop.

“No, my father, no!” she cried, sitting upright, and lightnings flashed from her eyes. “Yonder lies an unhappy man in his grave, not many steps away, under the sole weight of a hideous crime; here, in this sumptuous house, there is a woman crowned with the aureole of good deeds and a virtuous life. They bless the woman; they curse him, poor boy. On the criminal they heap execrations, I enjoy the good opinion of all; yet most of the blame of his crime is mine, and a great part of the good for which they praise me so and are grateful to me is his; cheat that I am! I have the credit of it, and he, a martyr to his loyalty to me, is covered with shame. In a few hours I shall die, and a whole canton will weep for me, a whole department will praise my good deeds, my piety, and my virtues; and he died reviled and scorned, a whole town crowding about to see him die, for hate of the murderer! You, my judges, are indulgent to me, but I hear an imperious voice within me that will not let me rest. Ah! God’s hand, more heavy than yours, has been laid upon me day by day, as if to warn me that

all was not expiated yet. My sin shall be redeemed by public confession. Oh! he was happy, that criminal who went to a shameful death in the face of earth and Heaven! But as for me, I cheated justice, and I am still a cheat! All the respect shown to me has been like mockery, not a word of praise but has scorched my heart like fire. And now the public prosecutor has come here. Do you not see that the will of Heaven is in accordance with this voice that cries 'Confess'?"

Both priests, the prince of the Church and the simple country parson, the two great luminaries, remained silent, and kept their eyes fixed on the ground. So deeply moved were the judges by the greatness and the submission of the sinner, that they could not pass sentence. After a pause the Archbishop raised his noble face, thin and worn with the daily practice of austerity in a devout life.

"My child," he said, "you are going beyond the commandments of the Church. It is the glory of the Church that she adapts her dogmas to the conditions of life in every age; for the Church is destined to make the pilgrimage of the centuries side by side with humanity. According to the decision of the Church, private confession has replaced public confession. This substitution has made the new rule of life. The sufferings which you have endured suffice. Depart in peace. God has heard you indeed."

"But is not this wish of a criminal in accordance with the rule of the Early Church, which filled heaven with as many saints and martyrs and confessors as there are stars in heaven?" Véronique cried earnestly. "Who was it that wrote 'Confess your faults one to another'? Was it not one of our Saviour's own immediate disciples? Let me confess my shame publicly upon my knees. That will be an expiation of the wrong that I have done to the world, and to a family exiled and almost extinct through my sin. The world should know that my good deeds are not an offering to God; that they are only the just payment of a debt. . . . Suppose that, when I am gone, some finger should raise the veil of lies that covers me? . . . Oh, the thought of it brings the supreme hour nearer."

"I see calculation in this, my child," the Archbishop said gravely. "There are still strong passions left in you; that which I deemed extinguished is——"

"My lord," she cried, breaking in upon the speaker, turning her fixed horror-stricken eyes on him, "I swear to you that my heart is purified so far as it may be in a guilty and repentant woman; there is no thought left in me now but the thought of God."

"Let us leave Heaven's justice to take its course, my lord," the curé said, in a softened voice. "I have opposed this idea for four years. It has caused the only differences of opinion which have arisen between my penitent and me. I have seen the very depths of this soul; earth has no hold left there. When the tears, sighs, and contrition of fifteen years have buried a sin in which two beings shared, do not think that there is the least luxurious taint in the long and dreadful remorse. For a long while memory has ceased to mingle its flames in the most ardent repentance. Yes, many tears have quenched so great a fire. I will answer," he said, stretching his hand out above Mme. Graslin's head and raising his tear-filled eyes, "I will answer for the purity of this archangel's soul. I used once to see in this desire a thought of reparation to an absent family; it seems as if God Himself has sent one member of it here, through one of those accidents in which His guidance is unmistakably revealed."

Véronique took the curé's trembling hand, and kissed it.

"You have often been harsh to me, dear pastor," she said; "and now, in this moment, I discover where your apostolic sweetness lay hidden.—You," she said, turning to the Archbishop, "you, the supreme head of this corner of God's earthly kingdom, be my stay in this time of humiliation. I shall prostrate myself as the lowest of women; you will raise me, a forgiven soul, equal, it may be, with those who have never gone astray."

The Archbishop was silent for a while, engaged, no doubt, in weighing the considerations visible to his eagle's glance.

"My lord," said the curé, "deadly blows have been aimed at religion. Will not this return to ancient customs, made

necessary by the greatness both of the sin and the repentance, be a triumph which will redound to us?"

"They will say that we are fanatics! that we have insisted on this cruel scene!" and the Archbishop fell once more to his meditations.

Just at that moment Horace Bianchon and Roubaud came in without knocking at the door. As it opened, Véronique saw her mother, her son, and all the servants kneeling in prayer. The curés of the two neighboring parishes had come to assist M. Bonnet; perhaps also to pay their respects to the great Archbishop, in whom the Church of France saw a cardinal-designate, hoping that some day the Sacred College might be enlightened by the advent of an intellect so thoroughly Gallican.

Horace Bianchon was about to start for Paris; he came to bid farewell to the dying lady, and to thank her for her munificence. He approached the bed slowly, guessing from the manner of the two priests that the inward wound which had caused the disease of the body was now under consideration. He took Véronique's hand, laid it on the bed, and felt her pulse. The deepest silence, the silence of the fields in a summer night, added solemnity to the scene. Lights shone from the great drawing-room, beyond the folding doors, and fell upon the little company of kneeling figures, the curés only were seated, reading their breviaries. About the crimson bed of state stood the Archbishop in his violet robes, the curé, and the two men of science.

"She is troubled even in death!" said Horace Bianchon. Like many men of great genius, he not seldom found grand words worthy of the scenes at which he was present.

The Archbishop rose, as if goaded by some inward impulse. He called M. Bonnet, and went towards the door. They crossed the chamber and the drawing-room, and went out upon the terrace, where they walked up and down for a few minutes. As they came in after a consideration of this point of ecclesiastical discipline, Roubaud went to meet them.

"M. Bianchon sent me to tell you to be quick; Mme. Graslin is dying in strange agitation, which is not caused by the severe physical pain which she is suffering."

The Archbishop hurried back, and in reply to Mme. Graslin's anxious eyes, he said, "You shall be satisfied."

Bianchon (still with his fingers on the dying woman's wrist) made an involuntary start of surprise; he gave Roubaud a quick look, and then glanced at the priests.

"My lord, this body is no longer our province," he said; "your words brought life in the place of death. You make a miracle credible."

"Madame has been nothing but soul this long time past," said Roubaud, and Véronique thanked him by a glance.

A smile crossed her face as she lay there, and, with the smile that expressed the gladness of a completed expiation, the innocent look of the girl of eighteen returned to her. The appalling lines traced by inward tumult, the dark coloring, the livid patches, all the details that but lately had contributed a certain dreadful beauty to her face, all alterations of all kinds, in short, had vanished; to those who watched Véronique it seemed as if she had been wearing a mask and had suddenly dropped it. The wonderful transfiguration by which the inward life and nature of this woman was made visible in her features was wrought for the last time. Her whole being was purified and illuminated, her face might have caught a gleam from the flaming swords of the guardian angels about her. She looked once more as she used to look in Limoges when they called her "the little Virgin." The love of God manifestly was yet stronger in her than the guilty love had been; the earthly love had brought out all the forces of life in her; the love of God dispelled every trace of the inroads of death. A smothered cry was heard. La Sauviat appeared; she sprang to the bed. "So I see my child again at last!" she exclaimed.

Something in the old woman's accent as she uttered the two words, "my child," conjured up such visions of early childhood and its innocence, that those who watched by this heroic deathbed turned their heads away to hide their emotion. The great doctor took Mme. Graslin's hand, kissed it, and then went his way, and soon the sound of his departing carriage sent echoes over the countryside, spreading the tidings that he had no hope of saving the life of her who

was the life of the country. The Archbishop, curé, and doctor, and all who felt tired, went to take a little rest. Mme. Graslin herself slept for some hours. When she awoke the dawn was breaking; she asked them to open the windows, she would see her last sunrise.

At ten o'clock in the morning the Archbishop, in pontifical vestments, came back to Mme. Graslin's room. Both he and M. Bonnet reposed such confidence in her that they made no recommendations as to the limits to be observed in her confession. Véronique saw other faces of other clergy, for some of the curés from neighboring parishes had come. The splendid ornaments which Mme. Graslin had presented to her beloved parish church lent splendor to the ceremony. Eight children, choristers in their red-and-white surplices, stood in a double row between the bed and the door of the great drawing-room, each of them holding one of the great candlesticks of gilded bronze which Véronique had ordered from Paris. A white-haired sacristan on either side of the dais held the banner of the Church and the crucifix. The servants, in their devotion, had removed the wooden altar from the sacristy and erected it near the drawing-room door; it was decked and ready for the Archbishop to say Mass. Mme. Graslin was touched by an attention which the Church pays only to crowned heads. The great folding doors that gave access to the dining-room stood wide open, so that she could see the hall of the château filled with people; nearly all the village was there.

Her friends had seen to everything, none but the people of the house stood in the drawing-room; and before them, grouped about the door of her room, she saw her intimate friends and those whose discretion might be trusted. M. Grossetête, M. de Granville, Roubaud, Gérard, Clousier, and Ruffin stood foremost among these. All of them meant to stand upright when the time came, so that the dying woman's confession should not travel beyond them. Other things favored this design, for the sobs of those about her drowned her voice.

Two of these stood out dreadfully conspicuous among the rest. The first was Denise Tascheron. In her foreign



dress, made with Quakerly simplicity, she was unrecognizable to any of the villagers who might have caught a glimpse of her. Not so for the public prosecutor; she was a figure that he was not likely to forget, and with her reappearance a dreadful light began to dawn on him. Now he had a glimpse of the truth, a suspicion of the part which he had played in Mme. Graslin's life, and then the whole truth flashed upon him. Less overawed than the rest by the religious influence, the child of the nineteenth century, the man of law felt a cruel sensation of dismay; the whole drama of Véronique's inner life in the Hôtel Graslin during Tascheron's trial opened out before him. The whole of that tragic epoch reconstructed itself in his memory, lighted up by La Sauviat's eyes, which gleamed with hate of him not ten paces away; those eyes seemed to direct a double stream of molten lead upon him. The old woman had forgiven him nothing. The impersonation of man's justice felt shudders run through his frame. He stood there heart-stricken and pallid, not daring to turn his eyes to the bed where the woman whom he had loved was lying, livid beneath the shadow of Death's hand, drawing strength from the very magnitude of her offense to quell her agony. Vertigo seized on him as he saw Véronique's shrunken profile, a white outline in sharp relief against the crimson damask.

The Mass began at eleven o'clock. When the curé of Vizay had read the epistle, the Archbishop divested himself of his dalmatic, and took up his station in the doorway—

"Christians here assembled to witness the administration of extreme unction to the mistress of this house, you who are uniting your prayers to those of the Church to make intercession with God for the salvation of her soul, learn that she thinks herself unworthy to receive the holy viaticum until she has made, for the edification of others, a public confession of her greatest sin. We withstood her pious desire, although this act of contrition was long in use in the Church in the earliest Christian times; but as the afflicted woman tells us that the confession touches on the rehabilitation of an unhappy child of this parish, we leave her free to follow the inspirations of repentance."

After these words, spoken with the benign dignity of a shepherd of souls, the Archbishop turned and gave place to Véronique. The dying woman was seen, supported by her mother and the curé, two great and venerable symbols: did she not owe her double existence to the earthly mother who had borne her, and to the Church, the mother of her soul? Kneeling on a cushion, she clasped her hands and meditated for a moment to gather up and concentrate the strength to speak from some source derived from Heaven. There was something unspeakably awful in that silent pause. No one dared to look at his neighbor. All eyes were fixed on the ground. Yet when Véronique looked up, she met the public prosecutor's glance, and the expression of that white face sent the color to her own.

"I should not have died in peace," Véronique began, in a voice unlike her natural tone, "if I had left behind the false impression which each one of you who hears me speak has possibly formed of me. In me you see a great sinner, who beseeches your prayers, and seeks to merit pardon by the public confession of her sin. So deeply has she sinned, so fatal were the consequences of her guilt, that it may be that no repentance will redeem it. And yet the greater my humiliation on earth, the less, doubtless, have I to dread from God's anger in the heavenly kingdom whither I fain would go.

"It is nearly twenty years since my father, who had such great belief in me, recommended a son of this parish to my care; he had seen in him a wish to live rightly, aptitude, and an excellent disposition. This young man was the unhappy Jean-François Tascheron, who thenceforward attached himself to me as his benefactress. How was it that my affection for him became a guilty one? That explanation need not, I think, be required of me. Yet perhaps it might be thought that the purest possible motives were imperceptibly transformed by unheard-of self-sacrifice, by human frailty, by a host of causes which might seem to be extenuations of my guilt. But am I the less guilty because our noblest affections were my accomplices? I would rather admit, in spite of the barriers raised by the delicacy natural

to our sex between me and the young man whom my father intrusted to me, that I, who by my education and social position might regard myself as his protégé's superior, listened, in an evil hour, to the voice of the Tempter. I soon found that my maternal position brought me into contact with him so close that I could not but be sensible of his mute and delicate admiration. He was the first and only creature to appreciate me at my just value. Perhaps, too, I myself was led astray by unworthy considerations. I thought that I could trust to the discretion of a young man who owed everything to me, whom chance had placed so far below me, albeit by birth we were equals. In fact, I found a cloak to screen my conduct in my name for charity and good deeds. Alas! (and this is one of my worst sins) I hid my passion in the shadow of the altar. I made everything conduce to the miserable triumph of a mad passion, the most irreproachable actions, my love for my mother, acts of a devotion that was very real and sincere and through so many errors,—all these things were so many links in a chain that bound me. My poor mother, whom I love so much, who hears me even now, was unwittingly and for a long while my accomplice. When her eyes were opened, I was too deeply committed to my dangerous way, and she found strength to keep my secret in the depths of her mother's heart. Silence in her has thus become the loftiest of virtues. Love for her daughter overcame the love of God. Ah! now I solemnly relieve her of the load of secrecy which she has carried. She shall end her days with no lie in her eyes and brow. May her motherhood absolve her, may her noble and sacred old age, crowned with virtues, shine forth in all its radiance, now that the link which bound her indirectly to touch such infamy is severed——”

Here Véronique's sobs interrupted her words; Aline made her inhale salts.

“Only one other has hitherto been in this secret, the faithful servant who does me this last service; she has, at least, feigned not to know what she must have known, but she has been in the secret of the austerities by which I have broken this weak flesh. So I ask pardon of the world for

having lived a lie, drawn into that lie by the remorseless logic of the world.

“Jean-François Tascheron is not as guilty as men may have thought him. Oh, all you who hear me! I beg of you to remember how young he was, and that his frenzy was caused at least as much by the remorse which seized on *me*, as by the spell of an involuntary attraction. And more, far more, do not forget that it was a sense of honor, if a mistaken sense of honor, which caused the greatest disaster of all. Neither of us could endure that life of continual deceptions. He turned from them to my own greatness, and, unhappy that he was, sought to make our fatal love as little of a humiliation as might be to me. So I was the cause of his crime. Driven by necessity, the unhappy man, hitherto only guilty of too great a love for his idol, chose of all evil actions the one most irreparable. I knew nothing of it until the very moment when the deed was done. Even as it was being carried out, God overturned the whole fabric of crooked designs. I heard cries that ring even yet in my ears, and went into the house again. I knew that it was a struggle for life and death, and that I, the object of this mad endeavor, was powerless to interfere. For Tascheron was mad; I bear witness that he was mad! . . .”

Here Véronique looked at the public prosecutor, and a deep audible sigh came from Denise.

“He lost his head when he saw his happiness (so he believed it to be) destroyed by unforeseen circumstances. Love led him astray, then fate dragged him from a misdemeanor to a crime, and from a crime to a double murder. At any rate, when he left my mother’s house he was an innocent man; when he returned, he was a murderer. I, and I only in the world, knew that the crime was not premeditated, nor accompanied by the aggravating circumstances which brought the sentence of death on him. A hundred times I determined to give myself up to save him, and a hundred times a terrible but necessary heroism outweighed all other considerations, and the words died on my lips. Surely my presence a few steps away must have contributed to give him the hateful, base, cowardly courage of a murderer,

If he had been alone, he would have fled. . . . It was I who had formed his nature, who had given him loftier thoughts and a greater heart; I knew him; he was incapable of anything cowardly or base. Do justice to the innocent hand, do justice to him! God in His mercy lets him sleep in the grave that you, guessing, doubtless, the real truth, have watered with your tears! Punish and curse the guilty thing here before you!—When once the deed was done, I was horror-struck; I did all that I could to hide it. My father had left a charge to me, a childless woman; I was to bring one child of God's family to God, and I brought him to the scaffold. . . . Oh, heap all your reproaches upon me! The hour has come!"

Her eyes glittered with fierce pride as she spoke. The Archbishop, standing behind her, with his pastoral cross held out above her head, no longer maintained his impassive attitude; he covered his eyes with his right hand. A smothered sound like a dying groan broke the silence, and two men—Gérard and Roubaud—caught Denise Tascheron in their arms. She had swooned away. The fire died down in Véronique's eyes; she looked troubled, but the martyr's serenity soon returned to her face.

"I deserve no praise, no blessings for my conduct here, as you know now," she said. "In the sight of Heaven I have led a life full of sharp penance, hidden from all other eyes, and Heaven will value it at its just worth. My outward life has been a vast reparation of the evil that I have wrought; I have engraved my repentance in characters ineffaceable upon this wide land, a record that will last forever. It is written everywhere in the fields grown green, in the growing township, in the mountain streams turned from their courses into the plain, once wild and barren, now fertile and productive. Not a tree shall be felled here for a century but the peasants will tell the tale of the remorse to which they owe its shade. In these ways the repentant spirit which should have inspired a long and useful life will still make its influence felt among you for a long time to come. All that you should have owed to *his* talents and a fortune honorably acquired has been done for you by the executrix

of his repentance, by her who caused his crime. All the wrong done socially has been repaired; I have taken upon myself the work of a life cut short in its flower, the life intrusted to my guidance, the life for which I must shortly give an account——”

Here once more the burning eyes were quenched in tears. She paused.

“There is one among those present,” she continued, “whom I have hated with a hate which I thought must be eternal, simply because he did no more than his duty. He was the first instrument of my punishment. I was too close to the deed, my feet were dipped too deep in blood, I was bound to hate justice. I knew that there was a trace of evil passion in my heart so long as that spark of anger should trouble it; I have had nothing to forgive, I have simply purged the corner where the Evil One lurked. Whatever the victory cost, it is complete.”

The public prosecutor turned a tear-stained face to Véronique. It was as if man's justice was remorseful in him. Véronique, turning her face away to continue her story, met the eyes of an old friend; Grossetête, bathed in tears, stretched out his hands entreatingly towards her. “It is enough!” he seemed to say. The heroic woman heard such a chorus of sobs about her, received so much sympathy, that she broke down; the balm of the general forgiveness was too much, weakness overcame her. Seeing that the sources of her daughter's strength were exhausted, the old mother seemed to find in herself the vigor of a young woman; she held out her arms to carry Véronique.

“Christians,” said the Archbishop, “you have heard the penitent's confession; it confirms the decree of man's justice; it may lay all scruples and anxiety on that score to rest. In this confession you should find new reasons for uniting your prayers to those of the Church, which offers to God the holy sacrifice of the Mass to implore His mercy for the sinner after so grand a repentance.”

The office was finished. Véronique followed all that was said with an expression of such inward peace that she no longer seemed to be the same woman. Her face wore a look

of frank innocence, such as it might have worn in the days when, a pure and ingenuous girl, she dwelt under her father's roof. Her brows grew white in the dawn of eternity, her face glowed golden in the light of Heaven. Doubtless she caught something of its mystic harmonies; and in her longing to be made one with God on earth for the last time, she exerted all her powers of vitality to live. M. Bonnet came to the bedside and gave her absolution; the Archbishop anointed her with the holy oil, with a fatherly tenderness that revealed to those who stood about how dear he held this sheep that had been lost and was found. With that holy anointing the eyes that had wrought such mischief on earth were closed to the things of earth, the seal of the Church was set on those too eloquent lips, and the ears that had listened to the inspirations of evil were closed forever. All the senses, mortified by penitence, were thus sanctified; the spirit of evil could have no power over this soul.

Never had all the grandeur and deep meaning of a sacrament been apprehended more thoroughly than by those who saw the Church's care thus justified by the dying woman's confession. After that preparation, Véronique received the Body of Christ with a look of hope and joy that melted the icy barrier of unbelief at which the curé had so often knocked in vain. Roubaud, confounded, became a Catholic from that moment.

Awful as the scene was, it was no less touching; and in its solemnity, as the culminating point of a drama, it might have given some painter the subject of a masterpiece. When the mournful episode was over, and the words of the Gospel of St. John fell on the ears of the dying woman, she beckoned to her mother to bring Francis back again. (The tutor had taken the boy out of the room.) When Francis knelt on the step by the bedside, the mother whose sins had been forgiven felt free to lay her hands in blessing on his head, and so she drew her last breath, La Sauviat standing at the post she had filled for twenty years, faithful to the end. It was she, a heroine after her manner, who closed the eyes of the daughter who had suffered so much, and laid a kiss on them.

Then all the priests and assistants came round the bed, and intoned the dread chant *De profundis* by the light of the flaming torches; and from those sounds the people of the whole countryside kneeling without, together with the friends and all the servants praying in the hall, knew that the mother of the canton had passed away. Groans and sobs mingled with the chanting. The noble woman's confession had not passed beyond the threshold of the drawing-room; it had reached none but friendly ears. When the peasants come from Montégnaç and all the district round about came in, each with a green spray, to bid their benefactress a supreme farewell mingled with tears and prayers, they saw a representative of man's justice, bowed down with anguish, holding the cold hand of the woman to whom all unwittingly he had meted out such a cruel but just punishment.

Two days later, and the public prosecutor, with Grossetête, the Archbishop, and the mayor, bore the pall when Mme. Graslin was carried to her last resting-place. Amid deep silence they laid her in the grave; no one uttered a word, for no one had the heart to speak, and all eyes were full of tears.

"She is a saint!" Everywhere the words were repeated along the roads which she had made, in the canton which owed its prosperity to her. It was as if the words were sown abroad across her fields to quicken the life in them. It struck nobody as a strange thing that Mme. Graslin should be buried beside Jean-François Tascheron. She had not asked this; but a trace of pitying tenderness in the old mother prompted her to bid the sacristan put those together whom earth had separated by a violent death, whom one repentance should unite in Purgatory.

Mme. Graslin's will fulfilled all expectations. She founded scholarships in the school at Limoges, and beds in the hospital, intended for the working classes only. A considerable sum (three hundred thousand francs in a period of six years) was left to purchase that part of the village called "Tascherons'," and for building an almshouse there. It was to serve as an asylum for the sick and aged poor of the district, a lying-in hospital for destitute women, and a home



for foundling children, and was to be known by the name of Tascheron's Almshouse. Véronique directed that it was to be placed in the charge of the Franciscan Sisters, and fixed the salary of the head physician and house-surgeon at four thousand francs. Mme. Graslin begged Roubaud to be the first head physician, and to superintend the execution of the sanitary arrangements and plans to be made by the architect, M. Gérard. She also endowed the commune of Montégnac with sufficient land to pay the taxes. A certain fund was put in the hands of the Church to be used as determined in some exceptional cases; for the Church was to be the guardian of the young; and if any of the children in Montégnac should show a special aptitude for art or science or industrial pursuits, the far-sighted benevolence of the testatrix provided thus for their encouragement.

The tidings of her death were received as the news of a calamity to the whole country, and no word that reflected on her memory went with it. This silence was the homage paid to her virtues by a devoutly Catholic and hardworking population, which is about to repeat the miracles of the *Lettres Édifiantes* in this corner of France.

Gérard, appointed Francis Graslin's guardian, was required by the terms of the will to live at the château, and thither he went; but not until three months after Véronique's death did he marry Denise Tascheron, in whom Francis found, as it were, a second mother. \*

# **THE FIRM OF NUCINGEN**



## PREFACE

*La Maison Nucingen* has interests of various kinds. The story of Mme. Surville, and the notary, and his testimony to Balzac's competence in bankruptcy matters, have been referred to in the General Introduction. *La Maison Nucingen* is scarcely less an example of this than *César Birotteau*. It is also a curious study of Parisian business generally, showing the intense and extraordinary interest which Balzac took in anything speculative. Evil tongues at the time identified Nucingen with the first Rothschild of the Paris branch, but the resemblances are of the most general and distant kind. Indeed, it may be said that Balzac, to his infinite honor both in character and genius, seldom indulged in the clumsy lugging in of real persons by head and shoulders which has come into fashion since his time, especially in France. Even where there are certain resemblances, as in Henri de Marsay to Charles de Rémusat, in Rastignac to Thiers, in Lousteau to Jules Janin, and elsewhere, the borrowed traits are so blended and disguised with others, and the whole so melted down and reformed by art, that not merely could no legitimate anger be aroused by them, but the artist could not be accused of having in any way exceeded his rights as an artist and his duty as a gentleman. If he has ever stepped out of these wise and decent limits, the transgression is very rare, and certainly Nucingen is not an example of it. For the rest, the story itself is perhaps more clever and curious than exactly interesting.

*La Maison Nucingen* (which the author also thought of calling *La Haute Banque*) originally appeared with *La Femme Supérieure (Les Employés)* and that part of *Splendeurs et Misères* entitled *La Torpille*, in October 1838, published by Werdet in two volumes. Six years later it took rank as a *Scène de la Vie Parisienne* in the first edition of the *Comédie*.

G. S.



## THE FIRM OF NUCINGEN

*To Mme. Zola Carraud.*

*To whom, madame, but to you should I inscribe this work; to you whose lofty and candid intellect is a treasury to your friends; to you that are to me not only a whole public, but the most indulgent of sisters as well? Will you deign to accept a token of the friendship of which I am proud? You, and some few souls as noble, will grasp the whole of the thought underlying The Firm of Nucingen, appended to César Birotteau. Is there not a whole social lesson in the contrast between the two stories?*

*De Balzac.*

YOU know how slight the partitions are between the private rooms of fashionable restaurants in Paris; Véry's largest room, for instance, is cut in two by a removable screen. This Scene is *not* laid at Véry's, but in snug quarters, which for reasons of my own I forbear to specify. We were two, so I will say, like Henri Monnier's Prudhomme, "I should not like to compromise *her*!"

We had remarked the want of solidity in the wall-structure, so we talked with lowered voices as we sat together in the little private room, lingering over the dainty dishes of a dinner exquisite in more senses than one. We had come as far as the roast, however, and still we had no neighbors; no sound came from the next room save the crackling of the fire. But when the clock struck eight, we heard voices and noisy footsteps; the waiters brought candles. Evidently there was a party assembled in the next room, and at the first words I knew at once with whom we had to do—four bold cormorants as ever sprang from the foam on the crests of the ever-rising waves of this present generation—four pleas-

ant young fellows whose existence was problematical, since they were not known to possess either stock or landed estates, yet they lived, and lived well. These ingenious *condottieri* of a modern industrialism, that has come to be the most ruthless of all warfares, leave anxieties to their creditors, and keep the pleasures for themselves. They are careful for nothing, save dress. Still, with courage of the Jean Bart order, that will smoke cigars on a barrel of powder (perhaps by way of keeping up their character), with a quizzing humor that outdoes the minor newspapers, sparing no one, not even themselves, clear-sighted, wary, keen after business, grasping yet open-handed, envious yet self-complacent, profound politicians by fits and starts, analyzing everything, guessing everything—not one of these in question as yet had contrived to make his way in the world which they chose for their scene of operations. Only one of the four, indeed, had succeeded in coming as far as the foot of the ladder.

To have money is nothing; the self-made man only finds out all that he lacks after six months of flatteries. Andoche Finot, the self-made man in question, stiff, taciturn, cold, and dull-witted, possessed the sort of spirit which will not shrink from groveling before any creature that may be of use to him, and the cunning to be insolent when he needs a man no longer. Like one of the grotesque figures in the ballet in *Gustave*, he was a marquis behind, a boor in front. And this high priest of commerce had a following.

Émile Blondet, Journalist, with abundance of intellectual power, reckless, brilliant, and indolent, could do anything that he chose, yet he submitted to be exploited with his eyes open. Treacherous or kind upon impulse, a man to love, but not to respect; quick-witted as a soubrette, unable to refuse his pen to anyone that asked, or his heart to the first that would borrow it, Émile was the most fascinating of those light-of-loves of whom a fantastic modern wit declared that "he liked them better in satin slippers than in boots."

The third in the party, Couture by name, lived by speculation, grafting one affair upon another to make the gains pay for the losses. He was always between wind and water,

keeping himself afloat by his bold, sudden strokes and the nervous energy of his play. Hither and thither he would swim over the vast sea of interests in Paris, in quest of some little isle that should be so far a debatable land that he might abide upon it. Clearly Couture was not in his proper place.

As for the fourth and most malicious personage, his name will be enough—it was Bixiou! Not (alas!) the Bixiou of 1825, but the Bixiou of 1836, a misanthropic buffoon, acknowledged supreme, by reason of his energetic and caustic wit; a very fiend let loose now that he saw how he had squandered his intellect in pure waste; a Bixiou vexed by the thought that he had not come by his share of the wreckage in the last Revolution; a Bixiou with a kick for everyone, like Pierrot at the Funambules. Bixiou had the whole history of his own times at his finger-ends, more particularly its scandalous chronicle, embellished by added waggeries of his own. He sprang like a clown upon everybody's back, only to do his utmost to leave the executioner's brand upon every pair of shoulders.

The first cravings of gluttony satisfied, our neighbors reached the stage at which we also had arrived, to-wit, the dessert; and, as we made no sign, they believed that they were alone. Thanks to the champagne, the talk grew confidential as they dallied with the dessert amid the cigar smoke. Yet through it all you felt the influence of the icy *esprit* that leaves the most spontaneous feeling frost-bound and stiff, that checks the most generous inspirations, and gives a sharp ring to the laughter. Their table-talk was full of the bitter irony which turns a jest into a sneer; it told of the exhaustion of souls given over to themselves; of lives with no end in view but the satisfaction of self—of egoism induced by these times of peace in which we live. I can think of nothing like it save a pamphlet against mankind at large which Diderot was afraid to publish, a book that bares man's breast simply to expose the plague-sores upon it. We listened to just such a pamphlet as *Rameau's Nephew*, spoken aloud in all good faith, in the course of after-dinner talk in which nothing, not even the



point which the speaker wished to carry, was sacred from epigram; nothing taken for granted, nothing built up except upon ruins, nothing revered save the skeptic's adopted article of belief—the omnipotence, omniscience, and universal applicability of money.

After some target practice at the outer circle of their acquaintances, they turned their ill-natured shafts at their intimate friends. With a sign I explained my wish to stay and listen as soon as Bixiou took up his parable, as will shortly be seen. And so we listened to one of those terrific improvisations which won that artist such a name among a certain set of seared and jaded spirits; and often interrupted and resumed though it was, memory serves me as a reporter of it. The opinions expressed and the form of expression lie alike outside the conditions of literature. It was, more properly speaking, a medley of sinister revelations that paint our age, to which indeed no other kind of story should be told; and, besides, I throw all the responsibility upon the principal speaker. The pantomime and the gestures that accompanied Bixiou's changes of voice, as he acted the parts of the various persons, must have been perfect, judging by the applause and admiring comments that broke from his audience of three.

"Then did Rastignac refuse?" asked Blondet, apparently addressing Finot.

"Point-blank."

"But did you threaten him with the newspapers?" asked Bixiou.

"He began to laugh," returned Finot.

"Rastignac is the late lamented de Marsay's direct heir; he will make his way politically as well as socially," commented Blondet.

"But how did he make his money?" asked Couture. "In 1819 both he and the illustrious Bianchon lived in a shabby boarding-house in the Latin Quarter; his people ate roast cockchafers and drank their own wine so as to send him a hundred francs every month. His father's property was not worth a thousand crowns; he had two sisters and a brother on his hands, and now——"

"Now he has an income of forty thousand livres," continued Finot; "his sisters had a handsome fortune apiece and married into noble families; he leaves his mother a life interest in the property——"

"Even in 1827 I have known him without a penny," said Blondet.

"Oh! in 1827," said Bixiou.

"Well," resumed Finot, "yet to-day, as we see, he is in a fair way to be a Minister, a peer of France—anything that he likes. He broke decently with Delphine three years ago; he will not marry except on good grounds; and he may marry a girl of noble family. The chap had the sense to take up with a wealthy woman."

"My friends, give him the benefit of extenuating circumstances," urged Blondet. "When he escaped the clutches of want, he dropped into the claws of a very clever man."

"You know what Nucingen is," said Bixiou. "In the early days, Delphine and Rastignac thought him 'good-natured'; he seemed to regard a wife as a plaything, an ornament in his house. And that very fact showed me that the man was square at the base as well as in height," added Bixiou. "Nucingen makes no bones about admitting that his wife is his fortune; she is an indispensable chattel, but a wife takes a second place in the high-pressure life of a political leader and great capitalist. He once said in my hearing that Bonaparte had blundered like a bourgeois in his early relations with Josephine; and that after he had had the spirit to use her as a stepping-stone, he had made himself ridiculous by trying to make a companion of her."

"Any man of unusual powers is bound to take Oriental views of women," said Blondet.

"The Baron blended the opinions of East and West in a charming Parisian creed. He abhorred de Marsay; de Marsay was unmanageable, but with Rastignac he was much pleased; he exploited him, though Rastignac was not aware of it. All the burdens of married life were put on him. Rastignac bore the brunt of Delphine's whims; he escorted

her to the Bois de Boulogne; he went with her to the play; and the little politician and great man of to-day spent a good deal of his life at that time in writing dainty notes. Eugène was scolded for little nothings from the first; he was in good spirits when Delphine was cheerful, and drooped when she felt low; he bore the weight of her confidences and her ailments; he gave up his time, the hours of his precious youth, to fill the empty void of that fair Parisian's idleness. Delphine and he held high councils on the toilettes which went best together; he stood the fire of bad temper and broadsides of pouting fits, while she, by way of trimming the balance, was very nice to the Baron. As for the Baron, he laughed in his sleeve; but whenever he saw that Rastignac was bending under the strain of the burden, he made 'as if he suspected something,' and reunited the lovers by a common dread."

"I can imagine that a wealthy wife would have put Rastignac in the way of a living, and an honorable living, but where did he pick up his fortune?" asked Couture. "A fortune so considerable as his at the present day must come from somewhere; and nobody ever accused him of inventing a good stroke of business."

"Somebody left it to him," said Finot.

"Who?" asked Blondet.

"Some fool that he came across," suggested Couture.

"He did not steal the whole of it, my little dears," said Bixiou.

"Let not your terrors rise to fever-heat,  
Our age is lenient with those that cheat."

Now, I will tell you about the beginnings of his fortune. In the first place, honor to talent! Our friend is not a 'chap,' as Finot describes him, but a gentleman in the English sense, who knows the cards and knows the game; whom, moreover, the gallery respects. Rastignac has quite as much intelligence as is needed at a given moment, as if a soldier should make his courage payable at ninety days' sight, with three witnesses and guarantees. He may seem captious, wrong-headed, inconsequent, vacillating, and with-

out any fixed opinions; but let something serious turn up, some combination to scheme out, he will not scatter himself like Blondet here, who chooses these occasions to look at things from his neighbor's point of view. Rastignac concentrates himself, pulls himself together, looks for the point to carry by storm, and goes full tilt for it. He charges like a Mural, breaks squares, pounds away at shareholders, promoters, and the whole shop, and returns, when the breach is made, to his lazy, careless life. Once more he becomes the man of the South, the man of pleasure, the trifling, idle Rastignac. He has earned the right of lying in bed till noon because a crisis never finds him asleep."

"So far so good, but just get to his fortune," said Finot.

"Bixiou will dash that off at a stroke," replied Blondet. "Rastignac's fortune was Delphine de Nucingen, a remarkable woman; she combines boldness with foresight."

"Did she ever lend you money?" inquired Bixiou. Everybody burst out laughing.

"You are mistaken in her," said Couture, speaking to Blondet; "her cleverness simply consists in making more or less piquant remarks, in loving Rastignac with tedious fidelity, and obeying him blindly. She is a regular Italian."

"Money apart," Andoche Finot put in sourly.

"Oh, come, come," said Bixiou coaxingly; "after what we have just been saying, will you venture to blame poor Rastignac for living at the expense of the firm of Nucingen, for being installed in furnished rooms precisely as La Torpille was once installed by our friend des Lupeaulx? You would sink to the vulgarity of the Rue Saint-Denis! First of all, 'in the abstract,' as Royer-Collard says, the question may abide the *Kritik of Pure Reason*; as for the impure reason——"

"There he goes!" said Finot, turning to Blondet.

"But there is reason in what he says," exclaimed Blondet. "The problem is a very old one; it was the grand secret of the famous duel between La Châtaigneraie and Jarnac. It was cast up to Jarnac that he was on good terms with his mother-in-law, who, loving him only too well, equipped him

sumptuously. When a thing is so true, it ought not to be said. Out of devotion to Henry II., who permitted himself this slander, La Châtaigneraie took it upon himself, and there followed the duel which enriched the French language with the expression *coup de Jarnac*."

"Oh! does it go so far back? Then it is noble?" said Finot.

"As proprietor of newspapers and reviews of old standing, you are not bound to know that," said Blondet.

"There are women," Bixiou gravely resumed, "and for that matter, men too, who can cut their lives in two and give away but one-half. (Remark how I word my phrase for you in humanitarian language.) For these, all material interests lie without the range of sentiment. They give their time, their life, their honor to a woman, and hold that between themselves it is not the thing to meddle with bits of tissue paper bearing the legend, '*Forgery is punishable with death*.' And equally they will take nothing from a woman. Yes, the whole thing is debased if fusion of interests follows on fusion of souls. This is a doctrine much preached, and very seldom practiced."

"Oh, what rubbish!" cried Blondet. "The Maréchal de Richelieu understood something of gallantry, and he settled an allowance of a thousand louis d'or on Mme. de la Popelinière after that affair of the hiding-place behind the hearth. Agnes Sorel, in all simplicity, took her fortune to Charles VII., and the King accepted it. Jacques Cœur kept the crown for France; he was allowed to do it, and, woman-like, France was ungrateful."

"Gentlemen," said Bixiou, "a love that does not imply an indissoluble friendship, to my thinking, is momentary libertinage. What sort of entire surrender is it that keeps something back? Between these two diametrically opposed doctrines, the one as profoundly immoral as the other, there is no possible compromise. It seems to me that any shrinking from a complete union is surely due to a belief that the union cannot last, and if so, farewell to illusion. The passion that does not believe that it will last forever is a hideous thing. (Here is pure, unadulterated Fénelon for

you!) At the same time, those who know the world, the observer, the man of the world, the wearers of irreproachable gloves and ties, the men who do not blush to marry a woman for her money, proclaim the necessity of a complete separation of sentiment and interest. The other sort are lunatics that love and imagine that they and the woman they love are the only two beings in the world; for them millions are dirt; the glove or the carnellia flower that she wore is worth millions. If the squandered filthy lucre is never to be found again in their possession, you find the remains of floral relics hoarded in dainty cedar-wood boxes. They cannot distinguish themselves one from the other; for them there is no 'I' left. *Thou*—that is their Word made flesh. What can you do? Can you stop the course of this 'hidden disease of the heart'? There are fools that love without calculation, and wise men that calculate while they love."

"To my thinking Bixiou is sublime," cried Blondet. "What does Finot say to it?"

"Anywhere else," said Finot, drawing himself up in his cravat, "anywhere else, I should say, with the 'gentlemen'; but here, I think——"

"With the scoundrelly scapegraces with whom you have the honor to associate?" said Bixiou.

"Upon my word, yes."

"And you?" asked Bixiou, turning to Couture.

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried Couture. "The woman that will not make a stepping-stone of her body, that the man she singles out may reach his goal, is a woman that has no heart except for her own purposes."

"And you, Blondet?"

"I do not preach, I practice."

"Very good," rejoined Bixiou in his most ironical tones. "Rastignac was not of your way of thinking. To take without repaying is detestable, and even rather bad form; but to take that you may render a hundredfold, like the Lord, is a chivalrous deed. This was Rastignac's view. He felt profoundly humiliated by his community of interests with Delphine de Nucingen; I can tell you that he regretted it; I have seen him deploring his position with tears in his

eyes. Yes, he shed tears, he did indeed—after supper. Well, now to *our* way of thinking——”

“I say, you are laughing at us,” said Finot.

“Not the least in the world. We were talking of Rastignac. From your point of view his affliction would be a sign of his corruption; for by that time he was not nearly so much in love with Delphine. What would you have? he felt the prick in his heart, poor fellow. But he was a man of noble descent and profound depravity, whereas we are virtuous artists. So Rastignac meant to enrich Delphine; he was a poor man, she a rich woman. Would you believe it?—he succeeded. Rastignac, who might have fought at need, like Jarnac, went over to the opinion of Henri II. on the strength of his great maxim, ‘There is no such thing as absolute right; there are only circumstances.’ This brings us to the history of his fortune.”

“You might just as well make a start with your story instead of drawing us on to traduce ourselves,” said Blondet with urbane good-humor.

“Aha! my boy,” returned Bixiou, administering a little tap to the back of Blondet’s head, “you are making up for lost time over the champagne!”

“Oh! by the sacred name of shareholder, get on with your story!” cried Couture.

“I was within an ace of it,” retorted Bixiou, “but you with your profanity have brought me to the climax.”

“Then, are there shareholders in the tale?” inquired Finot.

“Yes; rich as rich can be—like yours.”

“It seems to me,” Finot began stiffly, “that some consideration is owing to a good fellow to whom you look for a bill for five hundred francs upon occasion——”

“Waiter!” called Bixiou.

“What do you want with the waiter?” asked Blondet.

“I want five hundred francs to repay Finot, so that I can tear up my I. O. U. and set my tongue free.”

“Get on with your story,” said Finot, making believe to laugh.

“I take you all to witness that I am not the property

of this insolent fellow, who fancies that my silence is worth no more than five hundred francs. You will never be a minister if you cannot gauge people's consciences. There, my good Pinot," he added soothingly, "I will get on with my story without personalities, and we shall be quits."

"Now," said Couture with a smile, "he will begin to prove for our benefit that Nucingen made Rastignac's fortune."

"You are not so far out as you think," returned Bixiou. "You do not know what Nucingen is, financially speaking."

"Do you know so much as a word as to his beginnings?" asked Blondet.

"I have only known him in his own house," said Bixiou, "but we may have seen each other in the street in the old days."

"The prosperity of the firm of Nucingen is one of the most extraordinary things seen in our days," began Blondet. "In 1804 Nucingen's name was scarcely known. At that time bankers would have shuddered at the idea of three hundred thousand francs' worth of his acceptances in the market. The great capitalist felt his inferiority. How was he to get known? He suspended payment. Good! Every market rang with a name hitherto only known in Strasbourg and the Quartier Poissonnière. He issued deposit certificates to his creditors, and resumed payment; forthwith people grew accustomed to his paper all over France. Then an unheard-of thing happened—his paper revived, was in demand, and rose in value. Nucingen's paper was much inquired for. The year 1815 arrives, my banker calls in his capital, buys up Government stock before the battle of Waterloo, suspends payment again in the thick of the crisis, and meets his engagements with shares in the Wortschin mines, which he himself issued at twenty per cent. more than he gave for them! Yes, gentlemen!—He took a hundred and fifty thousand bottles of champagne of Grandet to cover himself (foreseeing the failure of the virtuous parent of the present Comte d'Aubrion), and as much Bordeaux wine of Duberghe at the same time. Those three hundred thousand bottles which he took over (and took over at thirty sous apiece, my dear boy) he supplied at the price of six francs



per bottle to the Allies in the Palais Royal during the foreign occupation, between 1817 and 1819. Nucingen's name and his paper acquired a European celebrity. The illustrious Baron, so far from being engulfed like others, rose the higher for calamities. Twice his arrangements had paid holders of his paper uncommonly well; *he* try to swindle them? Impossible. He is supposed to be as honest a man as you will find. When he suspends payment a third time, his paper will circulate in Asia, Mexico, and Australia, among the aborigines. No one but Ouvrard saw through this Alsatian banker, the son of some Jew or other converted by ambition; Ouvrard said, 'When Nucingen lets gold go, you may be sure that it is to catch diamonds.'

"His crony, du Tillet, is just such another," said Finot. "And, mind you, that of birth du Tillet has just precisely so much as is necessary to exist; the chap had not a farthing in 1814, and you see what he is now; and he has done something that none of us has managed to do (I am not speaking of you, Couture), he has had friends instead of enemies. In fact, he has kept his past life so quiet, that unless you rake the sewers you are not likely to find out that he was an assistant in a perfumer's shop in the Rue Saint-Honoré, no further back than 1814."

"Tut, tut, tut!" said Bixiou, "do not think of comparing Nucingen with a little dabbler like du Tillet, a jackal that gets on in life through his sense of smell. He scents a carcass by instinct, and comes in time to get the best bone. Besides, just look at the two men. The one has a sharp-pointed face like a cat, he is thin and lanky; the other is cubical, fat, heavy as a sack, imperturbable as a diplomatist. Nucingen has a thick, heavy hand, and lynx eyes that never light up; his depths are not in front, but behind; he is inscrutable, you never see what he is making for. Whereas du Tillet's cunning, as Napoleon said of somebody (I have forgotten the name), is like cotton spun too fine, it breaks."

"I do not myself see that Nucingen has any advantage over du Tillet," said Blondet, "unless it is that he has the sense to see that a capitalist ought not to rise higher than a

baron's rank, while du Tillet has a mind to be an Italian count."

"Blondet—one word, my boy," put in Couture. "In the first place, Nucingen dared to say that honesty is simply a question of appearances, and secondly, to know him well you must be in business yourself. With him banking is but a single department, and a very small one; he holds Government contracts for wines, wools, indigos—anything, in short, on which any profit can be made. He has an all-round genius. The elephant of finance would contract to deliver votes on a division, or the Greeks to the Turks. For him business means the sum-total of varieties; as Cousin would say, the unity of specialties. Looked at in this way, banking becomes a kind of statecraft in itself, requiring a powerful head; and a man thoroughly tempered is drawn on to set himself above the laws of a morality that cramps him."

"Right, my son," said Blondet; "but we, and we alone, can comprehend that this means bringing war into the financial world. A banker is a conquering general making sacrifices on a tremendous scale to gain ends that no one perceives; his soldiers are private people's interests. He has stratagems to plan out, partisans to bring into the field, ambushes to set, towns to take. Most men of this stamp are so close upon the borders of politics, that in the end they are drawn into public life, and thereby lose their fortunes. The firm of Necker, for instance, was ruined in this way; the famous Samuel Bernard was all but ruined. Some great capitalist in every age makes a colossal fortune, and leaves behind him neither fortune nor a family; there was the firm of Pâris Brothers, for instance, that helped to pull down Law; there was Law himself (beside whom other promoters of companies are but pygmies); there was Bouret and Beaujon—none of them left any representative. Finance, like Time, devours its own children. If the banker is to perpetuate himself, he must found a noble house, a dynasty; like the Fuggers of Antwerp, that lent money to Charles V. and were created Princes of Babenhausen, a family that exists at this day—in the *Almanach de Gotha*. The instinct of

self-preservation, working it may be unconsciously, leads the banker to seek a title. Jacques Cœur was the founder of the great noble house of Noirmoutier, extinct in the reign of Louis XIII. What power that man had! He was ruined for making a legitimate king; and he died, prince of an island in the Archipelago, where he built a magnificent cathedral."

"Oh! you are giving us a historical lecture, we are wandering away from the present; the crown has no right of conferring nobility, and barons and counts are made with closed doors; more is the pity!" said Finot.

"You regret the times of the *savonnette à vilain*, when you could buy an office that ennobled?" asked Bixiou. "You are right. *Je reviens à nos moutons*.—Do you know Beaudenord? No? no? no? Ah, well! See how all things pass away! Poor fellow, ten years ago he was the flower of dandyism; and now, so thoroughly absorbed that you no more know him than Finot just now knew the origin of the expression '*coup de Jarnac*'—I repeat that simply for the sake of illustration, and not to tease you, Finot. Well, it is a fact, he belonged to the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

"Beaudenord is the first pigeon that I will bring on the scene. And, in the first place, his name was Godefroid de Beaudenord; neither Finot, nor Blondet, nor Couture, nor I are likely to undervalue such an advantage as that! After a ball, when a score of pretty women stand behooded waiting for their carriages, with their husbands and adorers at their sides, Beaudenord could hear his people called without a pang of mortification. In the second place, he rejoiced in the full complement of limbs; he was whole and sound, had no mote in his eyes, no false hair, no artificial calves; he was neither knock-kneed nor bandy-legged, his dorsal column was straight, his waist slender, his hands white and shapely. His hair was black; he was of a complexion neither too pink, like a grocer's assistant, nor yet too brown, like a Calabrese. Finally, and this is an essential point, Beaudenord was not too handsome, like some of our friends that look rather too much of professional beauties to be anything else; but no more of that; we have said it, it is shocking! Well, he was

a crack shot, and sat a horse to admiration; he had fought a duel for a trifle, and had not killed his man.

"If you wish to know in what pure, complete, and unadulterated happiness consists in the Nineteenth Century in Paris—the happiness, that is to say, of a young man of twenty-six—do you realize that you must enter into the infinitely small details of existence? Beaudenord's bootmaker had precisely hit off his style of foot; he was well shod; his tailor loved to clothe him. Godefroid neither rolled his r's, nor lapsed into Normanism nor Gascog; he spoke pure and correct French, and tied his cravat correctly (like Finot). He had neither father nor mother—such luck had he!—and his guardian was the Marquis d'Aiglemont, his cousin by marriage. He could go among city people as he chose, and the Faubourg Saint-Germain could make no objection; for, fortunately, a young bachelor is allowed to make his own pleasure his sole rule of life, he is at liberty to betake himself wherever amusement is to be found, and to shun the gloomy places where cares flourish and multiply. Finally, he had been vaccinated (you know what I mean, Blondet).

"And yet, in spite of all these virtues," continued Bixiou, "he might very well have been a very unhappy young man. Eh! eh! that word happiness, unhappily, seems to us to mean something absolute, a delusion which sets so many wiseacres inquiring what happiness is. A very clever woman said that 'Happiness was where you chose to put it.'"

"She formulated a dismal truth," said Blondet.

"And a moral," added Finot.

"Double distilled," said Blondet. "Happiness, like Good, like Evil, is relative. Wherefore La Fontaine used to hope that in course of time the damned would feel as much at home in hell as a fish in water."

"La Fontaine's sayings are known in Philistia!" put in Bixiou.

"Happiness at six-and-twenty in Paris is not the happiness of six-and-twenty at—say Blois," continued Blondet, taking no notice of the interruption. "And those that proceed from this text to rail at the instability of opinion are

either knaves or fools for their pains. Modern medicine, which passed (it is its fairest title to glory) from a hypothetical to a positive science, through the influence of the great analytical school of Paris, has proved beyond a doubt that a man is periodically renewed throughout——”

“New haft, new blade, like Jeannot’s knife, and yet you think that he is still the same man,” broke in Bixiou. “So there are several lozenges in the harlequin’s coat that we call happiness; and—well, there was neither hole nor stain in this Godefroid’s costume. A young man of six-and-twenty, who would be happy in love, who would be loved, that is to say, not for his blossoming youth, nor for his wit, nor for his figure, but spontaneously, and not even merely in return for his own love; a young man, I say, who has found love in the abstract, to quote Royer-Collard, might yet very possibly find never a farthing in the purse which She, loving and beloved, embroidered for him; he might owe rent to his landlord; he might be unable to pay the bootmaker before mentioned; his very tailor, like France herself, might at last show signs of disaffection. In short, he might have love and yet be poor. And poverty spoils a young man’s happiness, unless he holds our transcendental views of the fusion of interests. I know nothing more wearing than happiness within combined with adversity without. It is as if you had one leg freezing in the draught from the door, and the other half-roasted by a brazier—as I have at this moment. I hope to be understood. Comes there an echo from thy waistcoat-pocket, Blondet? Between ourselves, let the heart alone, it spoils the intellect.

“Let us resume. Godefroid de Beaudenord was respected by his tradespeople, for they were paid with tolerable regularity. The witty woman before quoted—I cannot give her name, for she is still living, thanks to her want of heart——”

“Who is this?”

“The Marquise d’Espard. She said that a young man ought to live on an entresol; there should be no sign of domesticity about the place; no cook, no kitchen, an old manservant to wait upon him, and no pretense of a permanence.

In her opinion, any other sort of establishment is bad form. Godefroid de Beaudenord, faithful to this programme, lodged on an entresol on the Quai Malaquais; he had, however, been obliged to have this much in common with married couples, he had put a bedstead in his room, though for that matter it was so narrow that he seldom slept in it. An Englishwoman might have visited his rooms and found nothing 'improper' there. Finot, you have yet to learn the great law of the 'Improper' that rules Britain. But, for the sake of the bond between us—that bill for a thousand francs—I will just give you some idea of it. I have been in England myself.—I will give him wit enough for a couple of thousand," he added in an aside to Blondet.

"In England, Finot, you grow extremely intimate with a woman in the course of an evening, at a ball or wherever it is; next day you meet her in the street and look as though you knew her again—'improper.'—At dinner you discover a delightful man beneath your left-hand neighbor's dress-coat; a clever man; no high-mightiness, no constraint, nothing of an Englishman about him. In accordance with the traditions of French breeding, so urbane, so gracious as they are, you address your neighbor—'improper.'—At a ball you walk up to a pretty woman to ask her to dance—'improper.' You wax enthusiastic, you argue, laugh, and give yourself out, you fling yourself heart and soul into the conversation, you give expression to your real feelings, you play when you are at the card-table, chat while you chat, eat while you eat—'improper! improper! improper!' Stendhal, one of the cleverest and profoundest minds of the age, hit off the 'improper' excellently well when he said that such-and-such a British peer did not dare to cross his legs when he sat alone before his own hearth for fear of being improper. An English gentlewoman, were she one of the rabid 'Saints'—that most straitest sect of Protestants that would leave their whole family to starve if the said family did anything 'improper'—may play the deuce's own delight in her bedroom, and need not be 'improper,' but she would look on herself as lost if she received a visit from a man of her acquaintance in the aforesaid room. Thanks

to propriety, London and its inhabitants will be found petrified some of these days."

"And to think that there are asses here in France that want to import the solemn tomfoolery that the English keep up among themselves with that admirable self-possession which you know!" added Blondet. "It is enough to make any man shudder if he has seen the English at home, and recollects the charming, gracious French manners. Sir Walter Scott was afraid to paint women as they are for fear of being 'improper'; and at the close of his life repented of the creation of the great character of Effie in *The Heart of Midlothian*."

"Do you wish not to be 'improper' in England?" asked Bixiou, addressing Finot.

"Well?"

"Go to the Tuileries and look at a figure there, something like a fireman carved in marble ('Themistocles,' the statuary calls it), try to walk like the Commandant's statue, and you will never be 'improper.' It was through strict observance of the great law of the *Improper* that Godefroid's happiness became complete. Here is the story:—

"Beaudenord had a tiger, not a 'groom,' as they write that know nothing of society. The tiger, a diminutive Irish page, called Paddy, Toby, Joby (which you please), was three feet in height by twenty inches in breadth, a weasel-faced infant, with nerves of steel tempered in fire-water, and agile as a squirrel. He drove a landau with a skill never yet at fault in London or Paris. He had a lizard's eye, as sharp as my own, and he could mount a horse like the elder Francini. With the rosy cheeks and yellow hair of one of Rubens's Madonnas, he was double-faced as a prince, and as knowing as an old attorney; in short, at the age of ten he was nothing more nor less than a blossom of depravity, gambling and swearing, partial to jam and punch, pert as a *feuilletton*, impudent and light-fingered as any Paris street-arab. He had been a source of honor and profit to a well-known English lord, for whom he had already won seven hundred thousand francs on the racecourse. The aforesaid nobleman set no small store on Toby. His tiger

was a curiosity, the very smallest tiger in town. Perched aloft on the back of a thoroughbred, Joby looked like a hawk. Yet—the great man dismissed him. Not for greediness, not for dishonesty, nor murder, nor for criminal conversation, nor for bad manners, nor rudeness to my lady, nor for cutting holes in my lady's own woman's pockets, nor because he had been 'got at' by some of his master's rivals on the turf, nor for playing games of a Sunday, nor for bad behavior of any sort or description. Toby might have done all these things, he might even have spoken to milord before milord spoke to him, and his noble master might, perhaps, have pardoned that breach of the law domestic. Milord would have put up with a good deal from Toby; he was very fond of him. Toby could drive a tandem dog-cart, riding on the wheeler, postilion fashion; his legs did not reach the shafts, he looked in fact very much like one of the cherub heads circling about the Eternal Father in old Italian pictures. But an English journalist wrote a delicious description of the little angel, in the course of which he said that Paddy was quite too pretty for a tiger; in fact, he offered to bet that Paddy was a tame tigress. The description, on the heads of it, was calculated to poison minds and end in something 'improper.' And the superlative of 'improper' is the way to the gallows. Milord's circumspection was highly approved by my lady.

"But poor Toby, now that his precise position in insular zoology had been called in question, found himself hopelessly out of place. At that time Godefroid had blossomed out at the French Embassy in London, where he learned the adventures of Toby, Joby, Paddy. Godefroid found the infant weeping over a pot of jam (he had already lost the guineas with which milord gilded his misfortune). Godefroid took possession of him; and so it fell out that on his return among us he brought back with him the sweetest thing in tigers from England. He was known by his tiger—as Couture is known by his waistcoats—and found no difficulty in entering the fraternity of the club yept to-day the Grammont. He had renounced the diplomatic career; he ceased accordingly to alarm the susceptibilities of the ambi-



tious; and as he had no very dangerous amount of intellect, he was well looked upon everywhere.

"Some of us would feel mortified if we saw only smiling faces wherever we went; we enjoy the sour contortions of envy. Godefroid did not like to be disliked. Everyone has his taste. Now for the solid, practical aspects of life!

"The distinguishing feature of his chambers, where I have licked my lips over breakfast more than once, was a mysterious dressing-closet, nicely decorated, and comfortably appointed, with a grate in it and a bath-tub. It gave upon a narrow staircase, the folding doors were noiseless, the locks well oiled, the hinges discreet, the window panes of frosted glass, the curtain impervious to light. While the bedroom was, as it ought to have been, in a fine disorder which would suit the most exacting painter in water-colors; while everything therein was redolent of the Bohemian life of a young man of fashion, the dressing-closet was like a shrine—white, spotless, neat, and warm. There were no draughts from door or window, the carpet had been made soft for bare feet hastily put to the floor in a sudden panic of alarm—which stamps him as your thoroughbred dandy that knows life; for here, in a few moments, he may show himself either a noodle or a master in those little details in which a man's character is revealed. The Marquise previously quoted—no, it was the Marquise de Rochefide—came out of that dressing-closet in a furious rage, and never went back again. She discovered nothing 'improper' in it. Godefroid used to keep a little cupboard full of——"

"Waistcoats?" suggested Finot.

"Come, now, just like you, great Turcaret that you are. (I shall never form that fellow.) Why, no. Full of cakes, and fruit, and dainty little flasks of Malaga and Lunel; an *en cas de nuit* in Louis Quatorze's style; anything that can tickle the delicate and well-bred appetite of sixteen quarterings. A knowing old man-servant, very strong in matters veterinary, waited on the horses and groomed Godefroid. He had been with the late M. de Beaudenord, Godefroid's father, and bore Godefroid an inveterate affection a kind of

heart complaint which has almost disappeared among domestic servants since savings banks were established.

"All material well-being is based upon arithmetic. You, to whom Paris is known down to its very excrescences, will see that Beaudenord must have required about seventeen thousand livres per annum; for he paid some seventeen francs of taxes and spent a thousand crowns on his own whims. Well, dear boys, when Godefroid came of age, the Marquis d'Aiglemont submitted to him such an account of his trust as none of us would be likely to give a nephew; Godefroid's name was inscribed as the owner of eighteen thousand livres of *rentes*, a remnant of his father's wealth spared by the harrow of the great reduction under the Republic and the hailstorms of Imperial arrears. D'Aiglemont, that upright guardian, also put his ward in possession of some thirty thousand francs of savings invested with the firm of Nucingen; saying with all the charm of a *grand seigneur* and the indulgence of a soldier of the Empire, that he had contrived to put it aside for his ward's young man's follies. 'If you will take my advice, Godefroid,' added he, 'instead of squandering the money like a fool, as so many young men do, let it go in follies that will be useful to you afterwards. Take an attaché's post at Turin, and then go to Naples, and from Naples to London, and you will be amused and learn something for your money. Afterwards, if you think of a career, the time and the money will not have been thrown away.' The late lamented d'Aiglemont had more sense than people credited him with, which is more than can be said of some of us."

"A young fellow that starts with an assured income of eighteen thousand livres at one-and-twenty is lost," said Couture.

"Unless he is miserly, or very much above the ordinary level," added Blondet.

"Well, Godefroid sojourned in the four capitals of Italy," continued Bixiou. "He lived in England and Germany, he spent some little time at St. Petersburg, he ran over Holland; but he parted company with the aforesaid thirty thousand francs by living as if he had thirty thou-

sand a year. Everywhere he found the same *suprême de volaille*, the same aspics, and French wines; he heard French spoken wherever he went—in short, he never got away from Paris. He ought, of course, to have tried to deprave his disposition, to fence himself in triple brass, to get rid of his illusions, to learn to hear anything said without a blush, and to master the inmost secrets of the Powers.—Pooh! with a good deal of trouble he equipped himself with four languages—that is to say, he laid in a stock of four words for one idea. Then he came back, and certain tedious dowagers, styled ‘conquests’ abroad, were left disconsolate. Godefroid came back, shy, scarcely formed, a good fellow with a confiding disposition, incapable of saying ill of anyone who honored him with an admittance to his house, too stanch to be a diplomatist, altogether he was what we call a thoroughly good fellow.”

“To cut it short, a brat with eighteen thousand livres per annum to drop over the first investment that turns up,” said Couture.

“That confounded Couture has such a habit of anticipating dividends, that he is anticipating the end of my tale. Where was I? Oh! Beaudenord came back. When he took up his abode on the Quai Malaquais, it came to pass that a thousand francs over and above his needs was altogether insufficient to keep up his share of a box at the Italiens and the Opéra properly. When he lost twenty-five or thirty louis at play at one swoop, naturally he paid; when he won, he spent the money; so should we if we were fools enough to be drawn into a bet. Beaudenord, feeling pinched with his eighteen thousand francs, saw the necessity of creating what we to-day call a balance in hand. It was a great notion of his ‘not to get too deep.’ He took counsel of his sometime guardian. ‘The Funds are now at par, my dear boy,’ quoth d’Aiglemont; ‘sell out. I have sold out mine and my wife’s. Nucingen has all my capital, and is giving me six per cent.; do likewise, you will have one per cent. the more upon your capital, and with that you will be quite comfortable.’

“In three days’ time our Godefroid was comfortable.

His increase of income exactly supplied his superfluities; his material happiness was complete.

“Suppose that it were possible to read the minds of all the young men in Paris at one glance (as, it appears, will be done at the Day of Judgment with all the millions upon millions that have groveled in all spheres, and worn all uniforms or the uniform of nature), and to ask them whether happiness at six-and-twenty is or is not made up of the following items—to wit, to own a saddlehorse and a tilbury, or a cab, with a fresh, rosy-faced Toby Joby Paddy no bigger than your fist, and to hire an unimpeachable brougham for twelve francs an evening; to appear elegantly arrayed, agreeably to the laws that regulate a man’s clothes, at eight o’clock, noon, four o’clock in the afternoon, and in the evening; to be well received at every embassy, and to cull the short-lived flowers of superficial, cosmopolitan friendships; to be not insufferably handsome, to carry your head, your coat, and your name well; to inhabit a charming little entre-sol after the pattern of the rooms just described on the Quai Malaquais; to be able to ask a party of friends to dine at the Rocher de Cancale without a previous consultation with your trousers pocket; never to be pulled up in any rational project by the words, ‘And the money?’ and finally, to be able to renew at pleasure the pink rosettes that adorn the ears of three thoroughbreds and the lining of your hat?

“To such inquiry any ordinary young man (and we ourselves that are not ordinary men) would reply that the happiness is incomplete; that it is like the Madeleine without the altar; that a man must love and be loved, or love without return, or be loved without loving, or love at cross-purposes. Now for happiness as a mental condition.

“In January 1823, after Godefroid de Beaudenord had set foot in the various social circles which it pleased him to enter, and knew his way about in them, and felt himself secure amid these joys, he saw the necessity of a sunshade—the advantage of having a great lady to complain of, instead of chewing the stems of roses bought for fivepence apiece of Mme. Prévost. after the manner of the callow youngsters

that chirp and cackle in the lobbies of the Opéra, like chickens in a coop. In short, he resolved to center his ideas, his sentiments, his affections upon a woman, *one woman?*—*LA PHAMME!* Ah! . . .

“At first he conceived the preposterous notion of an unhappy passion, and gyrated for a while about his fair cousin, Mme. d’Aiglemont, not perceiving that she had already danced the waltz in *Faust* with a diplomatist. The year ’25 went by, spent in tentatives, in futile flirtations, and an unsuccessful quest. The loving object of which he was in search did not appear. Passion is extremely rare; and in our time as many barriers have been raised against passion in social life as barricades in the streets. In truth, my brothers, the ‘improper’ is gaining upon us, I tell you!

“As we may incur reproach for following on the heels of portrait painters, auctioneers, and fashionable dressmakers, I will not inflict any description upon you of *her* in whom Godefroid recognized the female of his species. Age, nineteen; height, four feet eleven inches; fair hair, eyebrows *idem*, blue eyes, forehead neither high nor low, curved nose, little mouth, short turned-up chin, oval face; distinguishing signs—none. Such was the description on the passport of the beloved object. You will not ask more than the police, or their worships the mayors, of all the towns and communes of France, the gendarmes and the rest of the powers that be? In other respects—I give you my word for it—she was a rough sketch of a Venus dei Medici.

“The first time that Godefroid went to one of the balls for which Mme. de Nucingen enjoyed a certain not undeserved reputation, he caught a glimpse of his future lady-love in a quadrille, and was set marveling by that height of four feet eleven inches. The fair hair rippled in a shower of curls about the little girlish head, she looked as fresh as a naiad peeping out through the crystal pane of her stream to take a look at the spring flowers. (This is quite in the modern style, strings of phrases as endless as the macaroni on the table a while ago.) On that ‘eyebrows *idem*’ (no offense to the prefect of police) Parny, that writer of light and playful verse, would have hung half-a-

dozen couplets, comparing them very agreeably to Cupid's bow, at the same time bidding us observe that the dart was beneath; the said dart, however, was neither very potent nor very penetrating, for as yet it was controlled by the namby-pamby sweetness of a Mlle. de la Vallière as depicted on fire-screens, at the moment when she solemnized her betrothal in the sight of heaven, any solemnization before the registrar being quite out of the question.

"You know the effect of fair hair and blue eyes in the soft, voluptuous, decorous dance? Such a girl does not knock audaciously at your heart, like the dark-haired damsel that seem to say after the fashion of Spanish beggars, 'Your money or your life; give me five francs or take my contempt!' These insolent and somewhat dangerous beauties may find favor in the sight of many men, but to my thinking the blonde that has the good fortune to look extremely tender and yielding, while foregoing none of her rights to scold, to tease, to use unmeasured language, to be jealous without grounds, to do anything, in short, that makes woman adorable,—the fair-haired girl, I say, will always be more sure to marry than the ardent brunette. Firewood is dear, you see.

"Isaure, white as an Alsacienne (she first saw the light at Strasbourg, and spoke German with a slight and very agreeable French accent), danced to admiration. Her feet, omitted on the passport, though they really might have found a place there under the heading Distinguishing Signs, were remarkable for their small size, and for that particular something which old-fashioned dancing masters used to call *flic-flac*, a something that put you in mind of Mlle. Mars's agreeable delivery, for all the Muses are sisters, and dancer and poet alike have their feet upon the earth. Isaure's feet spoke lightly and swiftly with a clearness and precision which augured well for the things of the heart. '*Elle a du flic-flac*,' was old Marcel's highest word of praise, and old Marcel was the dancing master that deserved the epithet of 'the Great.' People used to say 'the Great Marcel,' as they said 'Frederick the Great,' and in Frederick's time.

"Did Marcel compose any ballets?" inquired Finot.

“Yes, something in the style of *Les quatre Éléments* and *L’Europe Galante*.”

“What times they were, when great nobles dressed the dancers!” said Finot.

“Improper!” said Bixiou. “Isaure did not raise herself on the tips of her toes, she stayed on the ground, she swayed in the dance without jerks, and neither more or less voluptuously than a young lady ought to do. There was a profound philosophy in Marcel’s remark that every age and condition had its dance; a married woman should not dance like a young girl, nor a little jackanapes like a capitalist, nor a soldier like a page; he even went so far as to say that the infantry ought not to dance like the cavalry, and from this point he proceeded to classify the world at large. All these fine distinctions seem very far away.”

“Ah!” said Blondet, “you have set your finger on a great calamity. If Marcel had been properly understood, there would have been no French Revolution.”

“It had been Godefroid’s privilege to run over Europe,” resumed Bixiou, “nor had he neglected his opportunities of making a thorough comparative study of European dancing. Perhaps but for profound diligence in the pursuit of what is usually held to be useless knowledge, he would never have fallen in love with this young lady; as it was, out of the three hundred guests that crowded the handsome rooms in the Rue Saint-Lazare, he alone comprehended the unpublished romance revealed by a garrulous quadrille. People certainly noticed Isaure d’Aldrigger’s dancing; but in this present century the cry is, ‘Skim lightly over the surface, do not lean your weight on it’; so one said (he was a notary’s clerk), ‘There is a girl that dances uncommonly well’; another (a lady in a turban), ‘There is a young lady that dances enchantingly’; and a third (a woman of thirty), ‘That little thing is not dancing badly.’—But to return to the great Marcel, let us parody his best known saying with, ‘How much there is in an *avant-deux*.’”

“And let us get on a little faster,” said Blondet; “you are maundering.”

"Isaure," continued Bixiou, looking askance at Blondet, "wore a simple white crape dress with green ribbons: she had a camellia in her hair, a camellia at her waist, another camellia at her skirt-hem, and a camellia——"

"Come, now! here come Sancho's three hundred goats."

"Therein lies all literature, dear boy. *Clarissa* is a masterpiece, there are fourteen volumes of her, and the most wooden-headed playwright would give you the whole of *Clarissa* in a single act. So long as I amuse you, what have you to complain of? That costume was positively lovely. Don't you like camellias? Would you rather have dahlias? No? Very good, chestnuts then, here's for you." (And probably Bixiou flung a chestnut across the table, for we heard something drop on a plate.)

"I was wrong, I acknowledge it. Go on," said Blondet.

"I resume. 'Pretty enough to marry, isn't she?' said Rastignac, coming up to Godefroid de Baudenord, and indicating the little one with the spotless white camellias, every petal intact.

"Rastignac being an intimate friend, Godefroid answered in a low voice, 'Well, so I was thinking. I was saying to myself that instead of enjoying my happiness with fear and trembling at every moment; instead of taking a world of trouble to whisper a word in an inattentive ear, of looking over the house at the Italiens to see if someone wears a red flower or a white in her hair, or watching along the Corso for a gloved hand on a carriage door, as we used to do at Milan; instead of snatching a mouthful of baba like a lackey finishing off a bottle behind a door, or wearing out one's wits with giving and receiving letters like a postman—letters that consist not of a mere couple of tender lines, but expand to five folio volumes to-day and contract to a couple of sheets to-morrow (a tiresome practice); instead of dragging along over the ruts and dodging behind hedges—it would be better to give way to the adorable passion that Jean-Jacques Rousseau envied, to fall frankly in love with a girl like Isaure, with a view to making her my wife, if upon exchange of sentiments our hearts respond to each other; to be Werther, in short, with a happy ending.'



“‘Which is a common weakness,’ returned Rastignac without laughing. ‘Possibly in your place I might plunge into the unspeakable delights of that ascetic course; it possesses the merits of novelty and originality, and it is not very expensive. Your Monna Lisa is sweet, but inane as music for the ballet; I give you warning.’

“Rastignac made this last remark in a way which set Beaudenord thinking that his friend had his own motives for disenchanting him; Beaudenord had not been a diplomatist for nothing; he fancied that Rastignac wanted to cut him out. If a man mistakes his vocation, the false start none the less influences him for the rest of his life. Godefroid was so evidently smitten with Mlle. Isaure d’Aldrigger, that Rastignac went off to a tall girl chatting in the card-room.—‘Malvina,’ he said, lowering his voice, ‘your sister has just netted a fish worth eighteen thousand francs a year. He has a name, a manner, and a certain position in the world; keep an eye upon them; be careful to gain Isaure’s confidence; and if they philander, do not let her send a word to him unless you have seen it first—’

“Towards two o’clock in the morning, Isaure was standing beside a diminutive Shepherdess of the Alps, a little woman of forty, coquettish as a Zerlina. A footman announced that ‘Mme. la Baronne’s carriage stops the way,’ and Godefroid forthwith saw his beautiful maiden out of a German song draw her fantastical mother into the cloak-room, whither Malvina followed them; and (boy that he was) he must needs go to discover into what pot of preserves the infant Joby had fallen, and had the pleasure of watching Isaure and Malvina coaxing that sparkling person, their mamma, into her pelisse, with all the little tender precautions required for a night journey in Paris. Of course, the girls on their side watched Beaudenord out of the corners of their eyes, as well-taught kittens watch a mouse, without seeming to see it at all. With a certain satisfaction Beaudenord noted the bearing, manner, and appearance of the tall, well-gloved Alsatian servant in livery who brought three pairs of fur-lined overshoes for his mistresses.

“Never were two sisters more unlike than Isaure and Mal-

vina. Malvina the elder was tall and dark-haired, Isaure was short and fair, and her features were finely and delicately cut, while her sister's were vigorous and striking. Isaure was one of those women who reign like queens through their weakness, such a woman as a schoolboy would feel it incumbent upon him to protect; Malvina was the Andalous of Musset's poem. As the sisters stood together, Isaure looked like a miniature beside a portrait in oils.

"She is rich!" exclaimed Godefroid, going back to Rastignac in the ballroom.

"Who?"

"That young lady."

"Oh, Isaure d'Aldrigger? Why, yes. The mother is a widow; Nucingen was once a clerk in her husband's bank at Strasbourg. Do you want to see them again? Just turn off a compliment for Mme. de Restaud; she is giving a ball the day after to-morrow; the Baroness d'Aldrigger and her two daughters will be there. You will have an invitation."

"For three days Godefroid beheld Isaure in the camera obscura of his brain—his Isaure with her white camellias and the little ways she had with her head—saw her as you still see the bright thing on which you have been gazing after your eyes are shut, a picture grown somewhat smaller; a radiant, brightly colored vision flashing out of a vortex of darkness."

"Bixiou, you are dropping into phenomena, block us out our pictures," put in Couture.

"Here you are, gentlemen! Here is the picture you ordered!" (from the tones of Bixiou's voice, he evidently was posing as a waiter). "Finot! attention, one has to pull at your mouth as a jarvie pulls at his jade. In Mme. Theodora Marguerite Wilhelmine Adolphus (of the firm of Adolphus and Company, Mannheim), relict of the late Baron d'Aldrigger, you might expect to find a stout, comfortable German, compact and prudent, with a fair complexion mellowed to the tint of the foam on a pot of beer; and as to virtues, rich in all the patriarchal good qualities that Germany possesses—in romances, that is to say. Well, there was not a gray hair in the frisky ringlets that she wore on

either side of her face; she was still as fresh and as brightly colored on the cheek-bone as a Nuremberg doll; her eyes were lively and bright; a closely fitting, pointed bodice set off the slenderness of her waist. Her brow and temples were furrowed by a few involuntary wrinkles which, like Ninon, she would fain have banished from her head to her heel, but they persisted in tracing their zigzags in the more conspicuous place. The outlines of the nose had somewhat fallen away, and the tip had reddened, and this was the more awkward because it matched the color on the cheekbones.

“An only daughter and an heiress, spoiled by her father and mother, spoiled by her husband and the city of Strasbourg, spoiled still by two daughters who worshiped their mother, the Baroness d’Aldrigger indulged a taste for rose color, short petticoats, and a knot of ribbon at the point of the tightly fitting corselet bodice. Any Parisian meeting the Baroness on the boulevard would smile and condemn her outright; he does not admit any plea of extenuating circumstances, like a modern jury on a case of fratricide. A scoffer is always superficial, and in consequence cruel; the rascal never thinks of throwing the proper share of ridicule on society that made the individual what he is; for nature only makes dull animals of us, we owe the fool to artificial conditions.”

“The thing that I admire about Bixiou is his completeness,” said Blondet; “whenever he is not gibing at others, he is laughing at himself.”

“I will be even with you for that, Blondet,” returned Bixiou in a significant tone. “If the little Baroness was giddy, careless, selfish, and incapable in practical matters, she was not accountable for her sins; the responsibility is divided between the firm of Adolphus and Company of Mannheim and Baron d’Aldrigger with his blind love for his wife. The Baroness was as gentle as a lamb; she had a soft heart that was very readily moved; unluckily, the emotion never lasted long, but it was all the more frequently renewed.

“When the Baron died, for instance, the Shepherdess all but followed him to the tomb, so violent and sincere was her grief, but—next morning there were green peas at

lunch, she was fond of green peas, the delicious green peas calmed the crisis. Her daughters and her servants loved her so blindly that the whole household rejoiced over a circumstance that enabled them to hide the dolorous spectacle of the funeral from the sorrowing Baroness. Isaure and Malvina would not allow their idealized mother to see their tears.

"While the Requiem was chanted, they diverted her thoughts to the choice of mourning dresses. While the coffin was placed in the huge, black and white, wax-besprinkled catafalque that does duty for some three thousand dead in the course of its career—so I was informed by a philosophically minded mute whom I once consulted on the point over a couple of glasses of *petit blanc*—while an indifferent choir was bawling the *Dies iræ*, and a no less indifferent priest mumbling the office for the dead, do you know what the friends of the departed were saying as, all dressed in black from head to foot, they sat or stood in the church? (Here is the picture you ordered.) Stay, do you see them?

" 'How much do you suppose old d'Aldrigger will leave?' Desroches asked of Taillefer.—You remember Taillefer, that gave us the finest orgy ever known not long before he died? "

"But was Desroches an attorney in those days? "

"He was in treaty for a practice in 1822," said Couture. "It was a bold thing to do, for he was the son of a poor clerk who never made more than eighteen hundred francs a year, and his mother sold stamped paper. But he worked very hard from 1818 to 1822. He was Derville's fourth clerk when he came; and in 1819 he was second! "

"Desroches? "

"Yes. Desroches, like the rest of us, once groveled in the poverty of Job. He grew so tired of wearing coats too tight and sleeves too short for him, that he swallowed down the law in desperation and had just bought a bare license. He was a licensed attorney, without a penny, or a client, or any friends beyond our set; and he was bound to pay interest on the purchase-money and the cautionary deposit besides."

"He used to make me feel as if I had met a tiger

escaped from the Jardin des Plantes," said Couture. "He was lean and red-haired, his eyes were the color of Spanish snuff, and his complexion was harsh. He looked cold and phlegmatic. He was hard upon the widow, pitiless to the orphan, and a terror to his clerks; they were not allowed to waste a minute. Learned, crafty, double-faced, honey-tongued, never flying into a passion, rancorous in his judicial way."

"But there is goodness in him," cried Finot; "he is devoted to his friends. The first thing he did was to take Godeschal, Mariette's brother, as his head-clerk."

"At Paris," said Blondet, "there are attorneys of two shades. There is the honest man attorney; he abides within the province of the law, pushes on his cases, neglects no one, never runs after business, gives his clients his honest opinion, and makes them compromise on doubtful points—he is a Derville, in short. Then there is the starveling attorney, to whom anything seems good provided that he is sure of expenses; he will set, not mountains fighting, for he sells them, but planets; he will work to make the worse appear the better cause, and take advantage of a technical error to win the day for a rogue. If one of these fellows tries one of Maître Gonin's tricks once too often, the guild forces him to sell his connection. Desroches, our friend Desroches, understood the full resources of a trade carried on in a beggarly way enough by poor devils; he would buy up causes of men who feared to lose the day; he plunged into chicanery with a fixed determination to make money by it. He was right; he did his business very honestly. He found influence among men in public life by getting them out of awkward complications; there was our dear des Lupeaulx, for instance, whose position was so deeply compromised. And Desroches stood in need of influence; for when he began, he was anything but well looked on at the court, and he who took so much trouble to rectify the errors of his clients was often in trouble himself. See now, Bixiou, to go back to the subject—How came Desroches to be in the church?"

"'D'Aldrigger is leaving seven or eight hundred thousand francs,' Taillefer answered, addressing Desroches.

“ ‘Oh, pooh, there is only one man who knows how much *they* are worth,’ put in Werbrust, a friend of the deceased.

“ ‘Who?’

“ ‘That fat rogue Nucingen; he will go as far as the cemetery; d’Aldrigger was his master once, and out of gratitude he put the old man’s capital into his business.’

“ ‘The widow will soon feel a great difference.’

“ ‘What do you mean?’

“ ‘Well, d’Aldrigger was so fond of his wife. Now, don’t laugh, people are looking at us.’

“ ‘Look, here comes du Tillet; he is very late. The epistle is just beginning.’

“ ‘He will marry the eldest girl in all probability.’

“ ‘Is it possible?’ asked Desroches; ‘why, he is tied more than ever to Mme. Roguin.’

“ ‘Tied—he?—You do not know him.’

“ ‘Do you know how Nucingen and du Tillet stand?’ asked Desroches.

“ ‘Like this,’ said Taillefer; ‘Nucingen is just the man to swallow down his old master’s capital, and then to disgorge it.’

“ ‘Ugh! ugh!’ coughed Werbrust, ‘these churches are confoundedly damp; ugh! ugh! What do you mean by “disgorge it”?’

“ ‘Well, Nucingen knows that du Tillet has a lot of money; he wants to marry him to Malvina; but du Tillet is shy of Nucingen. To a looker-on, the game is good fun.’

“ ‘What!’ exclaimed Werbrust, ‘is she old enough to marry? How quickly we grow old!’

“ ‘Malvina d’Aldrigger is quite twenty years old, my dear fellow. Old d’Aldrigger was married in 1800. He gave some rather fine entertainments in Strasbourg at the time of his wedding, and afterwards when Malvina was born. That was in 1801 at the peace of Amiens, and here are we in the year 1823, Daddy Werbrust! In those days everything was Ossianized; he called his daughter Malvina. Six years afterwards there was a rage for chivalry, *Partant pour la Syrie*—a pack of nonsense—and he christened his

second daughter Isaure. She is seventeen. So there are two daughters to marry.'

" 'The women will not have a penny left in ten years' time,' said Werbrust, speaking to Desroches in a confidential tone.

" 'There is d'Aldrigger's man-servant, the old fellow bel-lowing away at the back of the church; he has been with them since the two young ladies were children, and he is capable of anything to keep enough together for them to live upon,' said Taillefer.

" *Dies iræ!* (from the minor canons.) *Dies illa!* (from the choristers.)

" 'Good-day, Werbrust' (from Taillefer), 'the *Dies iræ* puts me too much in mind of my poor boy.'

" 'I shall go too; it is too damp in here,' said Werbrust.

" *In favilla.*

" 'A few halfpence, kind gentlemen!' (from the beggars at the door.)

" 'For the expenses of the church!' (from the beadle, with a rattling clatter of the money-box.)

" *Amen* (from the choristers.)

" 'What did he die of?' (from a friend.)

" 'He broke a blood-vessel in the heel' (from an inquisitive wag).

" 'Who is dead?' (from a passer-by.)

" 'The Président de Montesquieu' (from a relative.)

" The sacristan to the poor, 'Get away, all of you; the money for you has been given to us; don't ask for any more.' "

" Done to the life!" cried Couture. And indeed it seemed to us that we heard all that went on in the church. Bixiou imitated everything, even the shuffling sound of the feet of the men that carried the coffin over the stone floor.

" There are poets and romancers and writers that say many fine things about Parisian manners," continued Bixiou, " but that is what really happens at a funeral. Ninety-nine out of a hundred that come to pay their respects to some poor devil departed, get together and talk business or pleasure in the middle of the church. To see some poor little

touch of real sorrow, you need an impossible combination of circumstances. And, after all, is there such a thing as grief without a thought of self in it?"

"Ugh!" said Brindet. "Nothing is less respected than death; is it that there is nothing less respectable?"

"It is so common!" resumed Bixiou. "When the service was over, Nucingen and du Tillet went to the graveside. The old man-servant walked; Nucingen and du Tillet were put at the head of the procession of mourning coaches — 'Goot, mein goot friend,' said Nucingen as they turned into the boulevard. 'It ees a goot time to marry Malfina; you will be der brodecor off dat boor family vat ees in tears; you vill haf ein family, a home off your own; you vill haf a house ready vurnished, and Malfina is truly ein dreashure.'"

"I seem to hear that old Robert Macaire of a Nucingen himself," said Finot.

"'A charming girl,' said Ferdinand du Tillet in a cool, unenthusiastic tone," Bixiou continued.

"Just du Tillet himself summed up in a word!" cried Couture.

"'Those that do not know her may think her plain,' pursued du Tillet, 'but she has character, I admit.'

"'Und ein herz, dot is the pest of die pizness, mein dear poy; she vould make you an indelligent und defoted vife. In our beastly pizness, nopody cares to know who lifs or dies; it is a crate plessing gif a mann kann put drust in his vife's heart. Mein Telvine prought me more as a million, as you know, but I should gladly gif her for Malfina dot haf not so pig a dot.'

"'But how much has she?'

"'I do not know precisely; boot she haf somdings.'

"'Yes, she has a mother with a great liking for rose-color,' said du Tillet; and with that epigram he cut Nucingen's diplomatic efforts short.

"After dinner the Baron de Nucingen informed Wilhelmine Adolphus that she had barely four hundred thousand francs deposited with him. The daughter of Adolphus of Mannheim, thus reduced to an income of twenty-four thou-



sand livres, lost herself in arithmetical exercises that muddled her wits.

“ ‘I have *always* had six thousand francs for our dress allowance,’ she said to Malvina. ‘Why, how did your father find money? We shall have nothing now with twenty-four thousand francs; it is destitution! Oh! if my father could see me so come down in the world, it would kill him if he were not dead already! Poor Wilhelmine!’ and she began to cry.

“Malvina, puzzled to know how to comfort her mother, represented to her that she was still young and pretty, that rose-color still became her, that she could continue to go to the Opéra and the Bouffons, where Mme. de Nucingen had a box. And so with visions of gayeties, dances, music, pretty dresses, and social success, the Baroness was lulled to sleep and pleasant dreams in the blue, silk-curtained bed in the charming room next to the chamber in which Jean Baptiste, Baron d’Aldrigger, had breathed his last but two nights ago.

“Here in a few words is the Baron’s history. During his lifetime that worthy Alsatian accumulated about three millions of francs. In 1800, at the age of thirty-six, in the apogee of a fortune made during the Revolution, he made a marriage partly of ambition, partly of inclination, with the heiress of the family of Adolphus of Mannheim. Wilhelmine, being the idol of her whole family, naturally inherited their wealth after some ten years. Next, d’Aldrigger’s fortune being doubled, he was transformed into a Baron by His Majesty, Emperor and King, and forthwith became a fanatical admirer of the great man to whom he owed his title. Wherefore, between 1814 and 1815 he ruined himself by a too serious belief in the sun of Austerlitz. Honest Alsatian as he was, he did not suspend payment, nor did he give his creditors shares in doubtful concerns by way of settlement. He paid everything over the counter, and retired from business, thoroughly deserving Nucingen’s comment on his behavior—‘Honest but stoobid.’

“All claims satisfied, there remained to him five hundred thousand francs and certain receipts for sums advanced to

that Imperial Government which had ceased to exist. 'See vat komms of too much pelief in Nappolion,' said he, when he had realized all his capital.

"When you have been one of the leading men in a place, how are you to remain in it when your estate has dwindled? D'Aldrigger, like all ruined provincials, removed to Paris, there intrepidly wore the tricolor braces embroidered with Imperial eagles, and lived entirely in Bonapartist circles. His capital he handed over to Nucingen, who gave him eight per cent. upon it, and took over the loans to the Imperial Government at a mere sixty per cent. of reduction; wherefore d'Aldrigger squeezed Nucingen's hand and said, 'I knew dot in you I should find de heart of ein Elzation.'

"(Nucingen was paid in full through our friend des Lupeaulx.) Well fleeced as d'Aldrigger had been, he still possessed an income of forty-four thousand francs; but his mortification was further complicated by the spleen which lies in wait for the business man so soon as he retires from business. He set himself, noble heart, to sacrifice himself to his wife, now that her fortune was lost, that fortune of which she had allowed herself to be despoiled so easily, after the manner of a girl entirely ignorant of money matters. Mme. d'Aldrigger accordingly missed not a single pleasure to which she had been accustomed; any void caused by the loss of Strasbourg acquaintances was speedily filled, and more than filled, with Paris gayeties. Even then, as now, the Nucingens lived at the higher end of financial society, and the Baron de Nucingen made it a point of honor to treat the honest banker well. His disinterested virtue looked well in the Nucingen salon.

"Every winter dipped into d'Aldrigger's principal, but he did not venture to remonstrate with his pearl of a Wilhelmine. His was the most ingenuous, unintelligent tenderness in the world. A good man, but a stupid one! 'What will become of them when I am gone?' he said, as he lay dying; and when he was left alone for a moment with Wirth, his old man-servant, he struggled for breath to bid him take care of his mistress and her two daughters, as if the one

reasonable being in the house were this Alsatian Caleb Balderstone.

“Three years afterwards, in 1826, Isaure was twenty years old, and Malvina still unmarried. Malvina had gone into society, and in course of time discovered for herself how superficial their friendships were, how accurately everyone was weighed and appraised. Like most girls that have been ‘well brought up,’ as we say, Malvina had no idea of the mechanism of life, of the importance of money, of the difficulty of obtaining it, of the prices of things. And so, for six years, every lesson that she had learned had been a painful one for her.

“D’Aldrigger’s four hundred thousand francs were carried to the credit of the Baroness’s account with the firm of Nucingen (she was her husband’s creditor for twelve hundred thousand francs under her marriage settlement), and when in any difficulty the Shepherdess of the Alps dipped into her capital as though it were inexhaustible.

“When our pigeon first advanced towards his dove, Nucingen, knowing the Baroness’s character, must have spoken plainly to Malvina on the financial position. At that time three hundred thousand francs were left; the income of twenty-four thousand francs was reduced to eighteen thousand. Wirth had kept up this state of things for three years! After that confidential interview, Malvina put down the carriage, sold the horses, and dismissed the coachman, without her mother’s knowledge. The furniture, now ten years old, could not be renewed, but it all faded together, and for those that like harmony the effect was not half bad. The Baroness herself, that so well preserved flower, began to look like the last solitary frost-touched rose on a November bush. I myself watched the slow decline of luxury by half-tones and semitones! Frightful, upon my honor! It was my last trouble of the kind; afterwards I said to myself, ‘It is silly to care so much about other people.’ But while I was in the civil service, I was fool enough to take a personal interest in the houses where I dined; I used to stand up for them; I would say no ill of them myself; I—oh! I was a child.

"Well, when the *ci-devant* pearl's daughter put the state of the case before her, 'Oh, my poor children,' cried she, 'who will make my dresses now? I cannot afford new bonnets; I cannot see visitors here nor go out.'—Now by what token do you know that a man is in love?" said Bixiou, interrupting himself. "The question is, whether Beaudenord was genuinely in love with the fair-haired girl."

"He neglects his interests," said Couture.

"He changes his shirt three times a day," from Finot.

"There is another question to settle first," opined Blondet; "a man of more than ordinary ability, can he, and ought he, to fall in love?"

"My friends," resumed Bixiou, with a sentimental air, "there is a kind of man who, when he feels that he is in peril of falling in love, will snap his fingers or fling away his cigar (as the case may be) with a 'Pooh! there are other women in the world.' Beware of that man for a dangerous reptile. Still, the Government may employ that citizen somewhere in the Foreign Office. Blondet, I call your attention to the fact that this Godefroid had thrown up diplomacy."

"Well, he was absorbed," said Blondet. "Love gives the fool his one chance of growing great."

"Blondet, Blondet, how is it that we are so poor?" cried Bixiou.

"And why is Finot so rich?" returned Blondet. "I will tell you how it is; there, my son, we understand each other. Come, here is Finot filling up my glass as if I had carried in his firewood. At the end of dinner one ought to sip one's wine slowly.—Well?"

"Thou hast said. The absorbed Godefroid became fully acquainted with the family—the tall Malvina, the frivolous Baroness, and the little lady of the dance. He became a servant after the most conscientious and restricted fashion. He was not scared away by the cadaverous remains of opulence; not he! by degrees he became accustomed to the threadbare condition of things. It never struck the young man that the green silk damask and white ornaments in the drawing-room were shabby, spotted, and old-fashioned, and

that the room needed refurnishing. The curtains, the tea-table, the knickknacks on the chimneypiece, the rococo chandelier, the Eastern carpet with the pile worn down to the thread, the pianoforte, the little flowered china cups, the fringed serviettes so full of holes that they looked like open work in the Spanish fashion, the green sitting-room with the Baroness's blue bedroom beyond it,—it was all sacred, all dear to him. It is only your stupid woman, brilliant with the brilliant beauty that throws heart, brain, and soul into the shade, who can inspire forgetfulness like this; a clever woman never abuses her advantages; she must be small-natured and silly to gain such a hold upon a man. Beaudenord actually loved the solemn old Wirth—he has told me so himself!

“That old rogue regarded his future master with the awe which a good Catholic feels for the Eucharist. Honest Wirth was a kind of Gaspard, a beer-drinking German sheathing his cunning in good-nature, much as a cardinal in the Middle Ages kept his dagger up his sleeve. Wirth saw a husband for Isaure, and accordingly proceeded to surround Godefroid with the mazy circumlocutions of his Alsatian's geniality, that most adhesive of all known varieties of bird-lime.

“Mme. d'Aldrigger was radically ‘improper.’ She thought love the most natural thing imaginable. When Isaure and Malvina went out together to the Champs Élysées or the Tuileries, where they were sure to meet the young men of their set, she would simply say, ‘A pleasant time to you, dear girls.’ Their friends among men, the only persons who might have slandered the sisters, championed them; for the extraordinary liberty permitted in the d'Aldriggers' salon made it unique in Paris. Vast wealth would scarcely have procured such evenings, the talk was good on any subject; dress was not insisted upon; you felt so much at home there that you could ask for supper. The sisters corresponded as they pleased, and quietly read their letters by their mother's side; it never occurred to the Baroness to interfere in any way; the adorable woman gave the girls the full benefits of her selfishness, and in a certain sense selfish persons are the easiest to live with; they hate trouble, and therefore do

not trouble other people; they never beset the lives of their fellow-creatures with thorny advice and captious fault-finding; nor do they torment you with the waspish solicitude of excessive affection that must know all things and rule all things——”

“This comes home,” said Blondet, “but, my dear fellow, this is not telling a story, this is *blague*——”

“Blondet, if you were not tipsy, I should really feel hurt! He is the one serious literary character among us; for his benefit, I honor you by treating you like men of taste, I am distilling my tale for you, and now he criticises me! There is no greater proof of intellectual sterility, my friends, than the piling up of facts. *Le Misanthrope*, that supreme comedy, shows us that art consists in the power of building a palace on a needle’s point. The gist of my idea is in the fairy wand which can turn the Desert into an Interlaken in ten seconds (precisely the time required to empty this glass). Would you rather that I fired a story off at you like a cannonball, or a commander-in-chief’s report? We chat and laugh; and this journalist, a bibliophobe when sober, expects me, forsooth, when he is drunk, to teach my tongue to move at the dull jog-trot of a printed book.” (Here he affected to weep.) “Woe unto the French imagination when men fain would blunt the needle points of her pleasant humor! *Dies iræ!* Let us weep for *Candide*. Long live the *Kritik of Pure Reason*, *La Symbolique*, and the systems in five closely packed volumes, printed by Germans, who little suspect that the gist of the matter has been known in Paris since 1750, and crystallized in a few trenchant words—the diamonds of our national thought. Blondet is driving a hearse to his own suicide; Blondet, forsooth; who manufactures newspaper accounts of the last words of all the great men that die without saying anything!”

“Come, get on,” put in Finot.

“It was my intention to explain to you in what the happiness of a man consists when he is not a shareholder (out of compliment to Couture). Well, now, do you not see at what a price Godefroid secured the greatest happiness of a young man’s dream? He was trying to understand Isaure, by way

of making sure that she should understand him. Things which comprehend one another must needs be similar. Infinity and Nothingness, for instance, are like; everything that lies between the two is like neither. Nothingness is stupidity; genius, Infinity. The lovers wrote each other the stupidest letters imaginable, putting down various expressions then in fashion upon bits of scented paper: 'Angel! Æolian harp! with thee I shall be complete! There is a heart in my man's breast! Weak woman, poor me!' all the latest heart-frippery. It was Godefroid's wont to stay in a drawing-room for a bare ten minutes; he talked without any pretension to the women in it, and at those times they thought him very clever. In short, judge of his absorption; Joby, his horses and carriages, became secondary interests in his life. He was never happy except in the depths of a snug settee opposite the Baroness, by the dark-green porphyry chimneypiece, watching Isaure, taking tea, and chatting with the little circle of friends that dropped in every evening between eleven and twelve in the Rue Joubert. You could play bouillotte there safely. (I always won.) Isaure sat with one little foot thrust out in its black satin shoe; Godefroid would gaze and gaze, and stay till everyone else was gone, and say, 'Give me your shoe!' and Isaure would put her little foot on a chair and take it off and give it to him, with a glance, one of those glances that—in short, you understand.

"At length Godefroid discovered a great mystery in Malvina. Whenever du Tillet knocked at the door, the live red that colored Malvina's face said 'Ferdinand!' When the poor girl's eyes fell on that two-footed tiger, they lighted up like a brazier fanned by a current of air. When Ferdinand drew her away to the window or a side table, she betrayed her secret infinite joy. It is a rare and beautiful thing to see a woman so much in love that she loses her cunning to be strange, and you can read her heart; as rare (dear me!) in Paris as the Singing Flower in the Indies. But in spite of a friendship dating from the d'Aldriggers' first appearance at the Nucingens', Ferdinand did not marry Malvina. Our ferocious friend was not apparently jealous of Desroches,

who paid assiduous court to the young lady; Desroches wanted to pay off the rest of the purchase-money due for his connection; Malvina could not well have less than fifty thousand crowns, he thought, and so the lawyer was fain to play the lover. Malvina, deeply humiliated as she was by du Tillet's carelessness, loved him too well to shut the door upon him. With her, an enthusiastic, highly wrought, sensitive girl, love sometimes got the better of pride, and pride again overcame wounded love. Our friend Ferdinand, cool and self-possessed, accepted her tenderness, and breathed the atmosphere with the quiet enjoyment of a tiger licking the blood that dyes his throat. He would come to make sure of it with new proofs; he never allowed two days to pass without a visit to the Rue Joubert.

"At that time the racial possessed something like eighteen hundred thousand francs; money must have weighed very little with him in the question of marriage; and he had not merely been proof against Malvina, he had resisted the Barons de Nucingen and de Rastignac; though both of them had set him galloping at the rate of seventy-five leagues a day, with outriders, regardless of expense, through mazes of their cunning devices—and with never a clew of thread.

"Godefroid could not refrain from saying a word to his future sister-in-law as to her ridiculous position between a banker and an attorney.

"'You mean to read me a lecture on the subject of Ferdinand,' she said frankly, 'to know the secret between us. Dear Godefroid, never mention this again. Ferdinand's birth, antecedents, and fortune count for nothing in this, so you may think it is something extraordinary.' A few days afterwards, however, Malvina took Godefroid apart to say, 'I do not think that Desroches is sincere' (such is the instinct of love); 'he would like to marry me, and he is paying court to some tradesman's daughter as well. I should very much like to know whether I am a second shift, and whether marriage is a matter of money with him.' The fact was that Desroches, deep as he was, could not make out du Tillet, and was afraid that he might marry Malvina. So the fellow had secured his retreat. His position was intolerable, he



was scarcely paying his expenses and interest on the debt. Women understand nothing of these things; for them, love is always a millionaire."

"But since neither du Tillet nor Desroches married her, just explain Ferdinand's motive," said Finot.

"Motive?" repeated Bixiou; "why, this. General Rule: A girl that has once given away her slipper, even if she refused it for ten years, is never married by the man who——"

"Bosh!" interrupted Blondet, "one reason for loving is the fact that one has loved. His motive? Here it is. General Rule: Do not marry as a sergeant when some day you may be Duke of Dantzic and Marshal of France. Now, see what a match du Tillet has made since then. He married one of the Comte de Granville's daughters, into one of the oldest families in the French magistracy."

"Desroches' mother had a friend, a druggist's wife," continued Bixiou. "Said druggist had retired with a fat fortune. These druggist folk have absurdly crude notions; by way of giving his daughter a good education, he had sent her to a boarding-school! Well, Matifat meant the girl to marry well, on the strength of two hundred thousand francs, good hard coin with no scent of drugs about it."

"Florine's Matifat?" asked Blondet.

"Well, yes. Lousteau's Matifat; ours, in fact. The Matifats, even then lost to us, had gone to live in the Rue du Cherche-Midi, as far as may be from the Rue des Lombards, where their money was made. For my own part, I had cultivated those Matifats. While I served my time in the galleys of the law, when I was cooped up for eight hours out of the twenty-four with nincompoops of the first water, I saw queer characters enough to convince myself that all is not dead-level even in obscure places, and that in the flattest inanity you may chance upon an angle. Yes, dear boy, such and such a philistine is to such another as Rafael is to Natoire.

"Mme. Desroches, the widowed mother, had long ago planned this marriage for her son, in spite of a tremendous obstacle which took the shape of one Cochin, Matifat's partner's son, a young clerk in the audit department. M. and

Mme. Matifat were of the opinion that an attorney's position 'gave some guarantee for a wife's happiness,' to use their own expression; and as for Desroches, he was prepared to fall in with his mother's views in case he could do no better for himself. Wherefore, he kept up his acquaintance with the druggists in the Rue du Cheval-Midi.

"To put another kind of happiness before you, you should have a description of these shopkeepers, male and female. They rejoiced in the possession of a handsome ground floor and a strip of garden; for amusement, they watched a little squirt of water, no bigger than a cornstalk, perpetually rising and falling upon a small round freestone slab in the middle of a basin some six feet across; they would rise early of a morning to see if the plants in the garden had grown in the night; they had nothing to do, they were restless, they dressed for the sake of dressing, bored themselves at the theater, and were forever going to and fro between Paris and Luzarches, where they had a country house. I have dined there.

"Once they tried to quiz me, Blondet. I told them a long-winded story that lasted from nine o'clock till midnight, one tale inside another. I had just brought my twentieth personage upon the scene (the newspapers have plagiarized with their 'continued in our next'), when old Matifat, who as host still held out, snored like the rest, after blinking for five minutes. Next day they all complimented me upon the ending of my tale!

"These tradespeople's society consisted of M. and Mme. Cochin, Mme. Desroches, and a young Popinot, still in the drug business, who used to bring them news of the Rue des Lombards. (You know him, Finot.) Mme. Matifat loved the arts; she bought lithographs, chromo-lithographs, and colored prints,—all the cheapest things she could lay her hands on. The Sieur Matifat amused himself by looking into new business speculations, investing a little capital now and again for the sake of the excitement. Florine had cured him of his taste for the Regency style of thing. One saying of his will give you some idea of the depths in my Matifat. 'Art thou going to bed, my nieces?' he used to

say when he wished them good-night, because (as he explained) he was afraid of hurting their feelings with the more formal 'you.'

"The daughter was a girl with no manner at all. She looked rather like a superior sort of housemaid. She could get through a sonata, she wrote a pretty English hand, knew French grammar and orthography—a complete commercial education, in short. She was impatient enough to be married and leave the paternal roof, finding it as dull at home as a lieutenant finds the night-watch at sea; at the same time, it should be said that her watch lasted through the whole twenty-four hours. Desroches or Cochin junior, a notary or a lifeguardsman, or a sham English lord,—any husband would have suited her. As she so obviously knew nothing of life, I took pity upon her, I determined to reveal the great secret of it. But, pooh! the Matifats shut their doors on me. The bourgeois and I shall never understand each other."

"She married General Gouraud," said Finot.

"In forty-eight hours, Godefroid de Beaudenord, late of the diplomatic corps, saw through the Matifats and their nefarious designs," returned Bixiou. "Rastignac happened to be chatting with the frivolous Baroness when Godefroid came in to give his report to Malvina. A word here and there reached his ear; he guessed the matter on foot, more particularly from Malvina's look of satisfaction that it was as she had suspected. Then Rastignac actually stopped on till two o'clock in the morning. And yet there are those that call him selfish! Beaudenord took his departure when the Baroness went to bed.

"As soon as Rastignac was left alone with Malvina, he spoke in a fatherly, good-humored fashion. 'Dear child, please to bear in mind that a poor fellow, heavy with sleep, has been drinking tea to keep himself awake till two o'clock in the morning, all for a chance of saying a solemn word of advice to you—*Marry!* Do not be too particular; do not brood over your feelings; never mind the sordid schemes of men that have one foot here and another in the Matifats' house; do not stop to think at all: *Marry!*—When a girl

marries, it means that the man whom she marries undertakes to maintain her in a more or less good position in life, and at any rate her comfort is assured. I know the world. Girls, mammas and grandmammas are all of them hypocrites when they fly off into sentiment over a question of marriage. Nobody really thinks of anything but a good position. If a mother marries her daughter well, she says that she has made an excellent bargain.' Here Rastignac unfolded his theory of marriage, which to his way of thinking is a business arrangement, with a view to making life tolerable; and ended up with, 'I do not ask to know your secret, Malvina; I know it already. Men talk things over among themselves, just as you women talk after you leave the dinner-table. This is all I have to say: Marry. If you do not, remember that I begged you to marry, here, in this room, this evening!'

"There was a certain ring in Rastignac's voice which compelled, not attention, but reflection. There was something startling in his insistence; something that went, as Rastignac meant that it should, to the quick of Malvina's intelligence. She thought over the counsel again next day, and vainly asked herself why it had been given."

Couture broke in. "In all these tops that you have set spinning, I see nothing at all like the beginnings of Rastignac's fortune," said he. "You apparently take us for Matifats multiplied by half a dozen bottles of champagne."

"We are just coming to it," returned Bixiou. "You have followed the course of all the rivulets which make up that forty thousand livres a year which so many people envy. By this time Rastignac held the threads of all these lives in his hand."

"Desroches, the Matifats, Beaudenord, the d'Aldriggers, d'Aiglemont?"

"Yes, and a hundred others," assented Bixiou.

"Oh, come now, how?" cried Finot. "I know a few things, but I cannot see a glimpse of an answer to this riddle."

"Blondet has roughly given you the account of Nucingen's first two suspensions of payment; now for the third, with full details.—After the peace of 1815, Nucingen

grasped an idea which some of us only fully understood later, to wit, that capital is a power only when you are very much richer than other people. In his own mind, he was jealous of the Rothschilds. He had five millions of francs, he wanted ten. He knew a way to make thirty millions with ten, while with five he could only make fifteen. So he made up his mind to operate a third suspension of payment. About that time, the great man hit on the idea of indemnifying his creditors with paper of purely fictitious value and keeping their coin. On the market, a great idea of this sort is not expressed in precisely this cut-and-dried way. Such an arrangement consists in giving a lot of grown-up children a small pie in exchange for a gold piece; and, like children of a smaller growth, they prefer the pie to the gold piece, not suspecting that they might have a couple of hundred pies for it."

"What is all this about, Bixiou?" cried Couture. "Nothing more *bonâ fide*. Not a week passes but pies are offered to the public for a louis. But who compels the public to take them? Are they not perfectly free to make inquiries?"

"You would rather have it made compulsory to take up shares, would you?" asked Blondet.

"No," said Finot. "Where would the talent come in?"

"Very good for Finot."

"Who put him up to it?" asked Couture.

"The fact was," continued Bixiou, "that Nucingen had twice had the luck to present the public (quite unintentionally) with a pie that turned out to be worth more than the money he received for it. That unlucky good luck gave him qualms of conscience. A course of such luck is fatal to a man in the long run. This time he meant to make no mistake of this sort; he waited ten years for an opportunity of issuing negotiable securities which should seem on the face of it to be worth something, while as a matter of fact——"

"But if you look at banking in that light," broke in Couture, "no sort of business would be possible. More than one *bonâ fide* banker, backed up by a *bonâ fide* government, has induced the hardest-headed men on 'Change to take up

stock which was bound to fall within a given time. You have seen better than that. Have you not seen stock created with the concurrence of a government to pay the interest upon older stock, so as to keep things going and tide over the difficulty? These operations were more or less like Nucingen's settlements."

"The thing may look queer on a small scale," said Blondet, "but on a large we call it finance. There are high-handed proceedings criminal between man and man that amount to nothing when spread out over any number of men, much as a drop of prussic acid becomes harmless in a pail of water. You take a man's life, you are guillotined. But if, for any political conviction whatsoever, you take five hundred lives, political crimes are respected. You take five thousand francs out of my desk; to the hulks you go. But with a sop cleverly pushed into the jaws of a thousand speculators, you can cram the stock of any bankrupt republic or monarchy down their throats; even if the loan has been floated, as Couture says, to pay the interest on that very same national debt. Nobody can complain. These are the real principles of the present Golden Age."

"When the stage machinery is so huge," continued Bixiou, "a good many puppets are required. In the first place, Nucingen had purposely and with his eyes open invested his five millions in an American investment, foreseeing that the profits would not come in until it was too late. The firm of Nucingen deliberately emptied its coffers. Any liquidation ought to be brought about naturally. In deposits belonging to private individuals and other investments, the firm possessed about six millions of capital altogether. Among those private individuals was the Baroness d'Aldrigger with her three hundred thousand francs, Beaudenord with four hundred thousand, d'Aiglemont with a million, Matifat with three hundred thousand, Charles Grandet (who married Mlle. d'Aubrión) with half a million, and so forth, and so forth.

"Now, if Nucingen had himself brought out a joint-stock company, with the shares of which he proposed to indemnify his creditors after more or less ingenious maneuvering, he

might perhaps have been suspected. He set about it more cunningly than that. He made someone else put up the machinery that was to play the part of the Mississippi scheme in Law's system: Nucingen can make the longest-headed men work out his schemes for him without confiding a word to them; it is his peculiar talent. Nucingen just let fall a hint to du Tillet of the pyramidal, triumphant notion of bringing out a joint-stock enterprise with capital sufficient to pay very high dividends for a time. Tried for the first time, in days when noodles with capital were plentiful, the plan was pretty sure to end in a run upon the shares, and consequently in a profit for the banker that issued them. You must remember that this happened in 1826.

"Du Tillet, struck though he was by an idea both pregnant and ingenious, naturally bethought himself that if the enterprise failed, the blame must fall upon somebody. For which reason, it occurred to him to put forward a figurehead director in charge of his commercial machinery. At this day you know the secret of the firm of Claparon and Company, founded by du Tillet, one of the finest inventions——"

"Yes," said Blondet, "the responsible editor in business matters, the instigator, and scapegoat; but we know better than that nowadays. We put, 'Apply at the offices of the Company, such and such a number, such and such a street,' where the public find a staff of clerks in green caps, about as pleasing to behold as broker's men."

"Nucingen," pursued Bixiou, "had supported the firm of Charles Claparon and Company with all his credit. There were markets in which you might safely put a million francs' worth of Claparon's paper. So du Tillet proposed to bring his firm of Claparon to the fore. So said, so done. In 1825 the shareholder was still an unsophisticated being. There was no such thing as cash lying at call. Managing directors did not pledge themselves not to put their own shares upon the market; they kept no deposit with the Bank of France; they guaranteed nothing. They did not even condescend to explain to shareholders the exact limits of their liabilities when they informed them that the directors, in their goodness, refrained from asking any more than a

thousand, or five hundred, or even two hundred and fifty francs. It was not given out that the experiment *in ære publico* was not meant to last for more than seven, five, or even three years, so that shareholders would not have long to wait for the catastrophe. It was in the childhood of the art. Promoters did not even publish the gigantic prospectuses with which they stimulate the imagination, and at the same time make demands for money of all and sundry."

"That only comes when nobody wishes to part with money," said Couture.

"In short, there was no competition in investments," continued Bixiou. "Papier-mâché manufacturers, cotton printers, zinc-rollers, theaters, and newspapers as yet did not hurl themselves like hunting dogs upon their quarry—the expiring shareholder. 'Nice things in shares,' as Couture says, put thus artlessly before the public, and backed up by the opinions of experts ('the princes of science'), were negotiated shamefacedly in the silence and shadow of the Bourse. Lynx-eyed speculators used to execute (financially speaking) the air *Calumny* out of *The Barber of Seville*. They went about *piano, piano*, making known the merits of the concern through the medium of stock-exchange gossip. They could only exploit the victim in his own house, on the Bourse, or in company; so they reached him by means of the skillfully created rumor which grew till it reached a *tutti* of a quotation in four figures——"

"And as we can say anything among ourselves," said Couture, "I will go back to the last subject."

"*Vous êtes orfèvre, M. Josse!*" cried Finot.

"Finot will always be classic, constitutional, and pedantic," commented Blondet.

"Yes," rejoined Couture, on whose account Cérizet had just been condemned on a criminal charge. "I maintain that the new way is infinitely less fraudulent, less ruinous, more straightforward than the old. Publicity means time for reflection and inquiry. If here and there a shareholder is taken in, he has himself to blame, nobody sells him a pig in a poke. The manufacturing industry——"

"Ah!" exclaimed Bixiou, "here comes industry——"



“——is a gainer by it,” continued Couture, taking no notice of the interruption. “Every government that meddles with commerce and cannot leave it free, sets about an expensive piece of folly; State interference ends in a *maximum* or a monopoly. To my thinking, few things can be more in conformity with the principles of free trade than joint-stock companies. State interference means that you try to regulate the relations of principal and interest, which is absurd. In business, generally speaking, the profits are in proportion to the risks. What does it matter to the State how money is set circulating, provided that it is always in circulation? What does it matter who is rich or who is poor, provided that there is a constant quantity of rich people to be taxed? Joint-stock companies, limited liability companies, every sort of enterprise that pays a dividend, has been carried on for twenty years in England, commercially the first country in the world. Nothing passes unchallenged there; the Houses of Parliament hatch some twelve hundred laws every session, yet no member of Parliament has ever yet raised an objection to the system——”

“A cure for plethora of the strong box. Purely vegetable remedy,” put in Bixiou, “*les carottes*” (gambling speculation).

“Look here!” cried Couture, firing up at this. “You have ten thousand francs. You invest it in ten shares of a thousand francs each in ten different enterprises. You are swindled nine times out of the ten—as a matter of fact you are not, the public is a match for anybody, but say that you are swindled, and only one affair turns out well (by accident!—oh, granted!—it was not done on purpose—there, chaff away!). Very well, the punter that has the sense to divide up his stakes in this way hits on a splendid investment, like those did who took shares in the Wortschin mines. Gentlemen, let us admit among ourselves that those who call out are hypocrites, desperately vexed because they have no good ideas of their own, and neither power to advertise nor skill to exploit a business. You will not have long to wait for proof. In a very short time you will see the aristocracy, the Court, and public men descend into speculation in serried col-

umns; you will see that their claws are longer, their morality more crooked than ours, while they have not our good points. What a head a man must have if he has to found a business in times when the shareholder is as covetous and keen as the inventor! What a great magnetizer must he be that can create a Claparon and hit upon expedients never tried before! Do you know the moral of it all? Our age is no better than we are; we live in an era of greed; no one troubles himself about the intrinsic value of a thing if he can only make a profit on it by selling it to somebody else; so he passes it on to his neighbor. The shareholder that thinks he sees a chance of making money is just as covetous as the founder that offers him the opportunity of making it."

"Isn't he fine, our Couture? Isn't he fine?" exclaimed Bixiou, turning to Plondet. "He will ask us next to erect statues to him as a benefactor of the species."

"It would lead people to conclude that the fool's money is the wise man's patrimony by divine right," said Blondet.

"Gentlemen" cried Couture, "let us have our laugh out here to make up for all the times when we must listen gravely to solemn nonsense justifying laws passed on the spur of the moment."

"He is right," said Blondet. "What times we live in, gentlemen! When the fire of intelligence appears among us, it is promptly quenched by haphazard legislation. Almost all our lawgivers come up from little parishes where they studied human nature through the medium of the newspapers; forthwith they shut down the safety-valve, and when the machinery blows up there is weeping and gnashing of teeth! We do nothing nowadays but pass penal laws and levy taxes. Will you have the sum of it all?—There is no religion left in the State!"

"Oh, bravo, Blondet!" cried Bixiou, "thou hast set thy finger on the weak spot. Meddlesome taxation has lost us more victories here in France than the vexatious chances of war. I once spent seven years in the hulks of a government department, chained with bourgeois to my bench. There was a clerk in the office, a man with a head on his shoulders; he had set his mind upon making a sweeping reform of the

whole fiscal system—ah, well, we took the conceit out of him nicely. France might have been too prosperous, you know; she might have amused herself by conquering Europe again; we acted in the interests of the peace of nations. I slew Rabourdin with a caricature.”<sup>1</sup>

“By *religion* I do not mean cant; I use the word in its wide political sense,” rejoined Blondet.

“Explain your meaning,” said Finot.

“Here it is,” returned Blondet. “There has been a good deal said about affairs at Lyons; about the Republic cannonaded in the streets; well, there was not a word of truth in it all. The Republic took up the riots, just as an insurgent snatches up a rifle. The truth is queer and profound, I can tell you. The Lyons trade is a soulless trade. They will not weave a yard of silk unless they have the order and are sure of payment. If orders fall off, the workmen may starve; they can scarcely earn a living, convicts are better off. After the Revolution of July, the distress reached such a pitch that the Lyons weavers—the *canuts*, as they call them—hoisted the flag, ‘Bread or Death!’ a proclamation of a kind which compels the attention of a government. It was really brought about by the cost of living at Lyons; Lyons must build theaters and become a metropolis, forsooth, and the octroi duties accordingly were insanely high. The Republicans got wind of this bread riot, they organized the *canuts* in two camps, and fought among themselves. Lyons had her Three Days, but order was restored, and the silk weavers went back to their dens. Hitherto the *canut* had been honest; the silk for his work was weighed out to him in hanks, and he brought back the same weight of woven tissue; now he made up his mind that the silk merchants were oppressing him; he put honesty out at the door and rubbed oil on his fingers. He still brought back weight for weight, but he sold the silk represented by the oil; and the French silk trade has suffered from a plague of ‘greased silks,’ which might have ruined Lyons and a whole branch of French commerce. The masters and the government, instead of removing the causes of the evil, simply drove it in with a violent

<sup>1</sup> See *Les Employés*.

external application. They ought to have sent a clever man to Lyons, one of those men that are said to have no principle, an Abbé Terray; but they looked at the affair from a military point of view. The result of the troubles is a *gros de Naples* at forty sous per yard; the silk is sold at this day, I dare say, and the masters no doubt have hit upon some new check upon the men. This method of manufacturing without looking ahead ought never to have existed in the country where one of the greatest citizens that France has ever known ruined himself to keep six thousand weavers in work without orders. Richard Lenoir fed them, and the government was thickheaded enough to allow him to suffer from the fall of the prices of textile fabrics brought about by the Revolution of 1814. Richard Lenoir is the one case of a merchant that deserves a statue. And yet the subscription set on foot for him has no subscribers, while the fund for General Foy's children reached a million francs. Lyons has drawn her own conclusions; she knows France, she knows that there is no religion left. The story of Richard Lenoir is one of those blunders which Fouché condemned as worse than a crime."

"Suppose that there is a tinge of charlatanism in the way in which concerns are put before the public," began Couture, returning to the charge, "that word charlatanism has come to be a damaging expression, a middle term, as it were, between right and wrong; for where, I ask you, does charlatanism begin? where does it end? what is charlatanism? do me the kindness of telling me what it is *not*. Now for a little plain speaking, the rarest social ingredient. A business which should consist in going out at night to look for goods to sell in the day would be obviously impossible. You find the instinct of forestalling the market in the very match-seller. How to forestall the market—that is the one idea of the so-called honest tradesman of the Rue Saint-Denis, as of the most brazen-fronted speculator. If stocks are heavy, sell you must. If sales are slow, you must tickle your customer; hence the signs of the Middle Ages, hence the modern prospectus. I do not see a hair's breadth of difference between attracting custom and forcing your goods upon the

consumer. It may happen, it is sure to happen, it often happens, that a shopkeeper gets hold of damaged goods, for the seller always cheats the buyer. Go and ask the most upright folk in Paris—the best known men in business, that is—and they will all triumphantly tell you of dodges by which they passed off stock which they knew to be bad upon the public. The well-known firm of Minard began by sales of this kind. In the Rue Saint-Denis they sell nothing but ‘greased silk’; it is all that they can do. The most honest merchants tell you in the most candid way that ‘you must get out of a bad bargain as best you can’—a motto for the most unscrupulous rascality. Blondet has given you an account of the Lyons affair, its causes and effects, and I proceed in my turn to illustrate my theory with an anecdote:—There was once a woollen weaver, an ambitious man, burdened with a large family of children by a wife too much beloved. He put too much faith in the Republic, laid in a stock of scarlet wool, and manufactured those red knitted caps that you may have noticed on the heads of all the street urchins in Paris. How this came about I am just going to tell you. The Republic was beaten. After the Saint-Merri affair the caps were quite unsalable. Now, when a weaver finds that beside a wife and children he has some ten thousand red woollen caps in the house, and that no hatter will take a single one of them, notions begin to pass through his head as fast as if he were a banker racking his brains to get rid of ten million francs’ worth of shares in some dubious investment. As for this Law of the Faubourg, this Nucingen of caps, do you know what he did? He went to find a pothouse dandy, one of those comic men that drive police sergeants to despair at open-air dancing saloons at the barriers; him he engaged to play the part of an American captain staying at Meurice’s and buying for the export trade. He was to go to some large hatter, who still had a cap in his shop window, and “inquire for” ten thousand red woollen caps. The hatter, scenting business in the wind, hurried round to the woollen weaver and rushed upon the stock. After that, no more of the American captain, you understand, and great plenty of caps. If you interfere with

the freedom of trade, because free trade has its drawbacks, you might as well tie the hands of justice because a crime sometimes goes unpunished, or blame the bad organization of society because civilization produces some evils. From the caps and the Rue Saint-Denis to joint-stock companies and the Bank—— draw your own conclusions.”

“A crown for Couture!” said Blendet, twisting a serviette into a wreath for his head. “I go further than that, gentlemen. If there is a defect in the working hypothesis, what is the cause? The law! the whole system of legislation. The blame rests with the legislature. The great men of their districts are sent up to us by the provinces, crammed with parochial notions of right and wrong; and ideas that are indispensable if you want to keep clear of collisions with justice, are stupid when they prevent a man from rising to the height at which a maker of laws ought to abide. Legislation may prohibit such and such developments of human passions—gambling, lotteries, the Ninons of the pavement, anything you please—but you cannot extirpate the passions themselves by any amount of legislation. Abolish them, you would abolish the society which develops them, even if it does not produce them. The gambling passion lurks, for instance, at the bottom of every heart, be it a girl’s heart, a provincial’s, a diplomatist’s; everybody longs to have money without working for it; you may hedge the desire about with restrictions, but the gambling mania immediately breaks out in another form. You stupidly suppress lotteries, but the cookmaid pilfers none the less, and puts her ill gotten gains in the savings bank. She gambles with two hundred and fifty franc stakes instead of forty sous; joint-stock companies and speculation take the place of the lottery; the gambling goes on without the green cloth, the croupier’s rake is invisible, the cheating planned beforehand. The gambling houses are closed, the lottery has come to an end; ‘and now,’ cry idiots, ‘morals have greatly improved in France,’ as if, forsooth, they had suppressed the punters. The gambling still goes on, only the State makes nothing from it now; and for a tax paid with pleasure, it has substituted a burdensome duty. Nor is the number of suicides

reduced, for the gambler never dies, though his victim does."

"I am not speaking now of foreign capital lost to France," continued Couture, "nor of the Frankfort lotteries. The convention passed a decree of death against those who hawked foreign lottery-tickets, and procureur-syndics used to traffic in them. So much for the sense of our legislator and his driveling philanthropy. The encouragement given to savings banks is a piece of crass political folly. Suppose that things take a doubtful turn and people lose confidence, the Government will find that they have instituted a cue for money, like the cues outside the bakers' shops. So many savings banks, so many riots. Three street boys hoist a flag in some corner or other, and you have a revolution ready made.

"But this danger, however great it may be, seems to me less to be dreaded than the widespread demoralization. Savings banks are a means of inoculating the people, the classes least restrained by education or by reason from schemes that are tacitly criminal with the vices bred of self-interest. See what comes of philanthropy!

"A great politician ought to be without a conscience in abstract questions, or he is a bad steersman for a nation. An honest politician is a steam-engine with feelings, a pilot that would make love at the helm and let the ship go down. A prime minister who helps himself to millions but makes France prosperous and great is preferable, is he not, to a public servant who ruins his country, even though he is buried at the public expense. Would you hesitate between a Richelieu, a Mazarin, or a Potemkin, each with his hundreds of millions of francs, and a conscientious Robert Lindet that could make nothing out of *assignats* and national property, or one of the virtuous imbeciles who ruined Louis XVI.? Go on, Bixiou."

"I will not go into the details of the speculation which we owe to Nucingen's financial genius. It would be the more inexpedient because the concern is still in existence and shares are quoted on the Bourse. The scheme was so convincing, there was such life in an enterprise sanctioned by

royal letters patent, that though the shares issued at a thousand francs fell to three hundred, they rose to seven, and will reach par yet, after weathering the stormy years '27, '30, and '32. The financial crisis of 1827 sent them down; after the Revolution of July they fell flat; but there really is something in the affair, Nucingen simply could not invent a bad speculation. In short, as several banks of the highest standing have been mixed up in the affair, it would be unparliamentary to go further into detail. The nominal capital amounted to ten millions; the real capital to seven. Three millions were allotted to the founders and bankers that brought it out. Everything was done with a view to sending up the shares two hundred francs during the first six months by the payment of a sham dividend. Twenty per cent. on ten millions! Du Tillet's interest in the concern amounted to five hundred thousand francs. In the stock exchange slang of the day, this share of the spoils was a 'sop in the pan.' Nucingen, with his millions made by the aid of a lithographer's stone and a handful of pink paper, proposed to himself to operate certain nice little shares carefully hoarded in his private office till the time came for putting them on the market. The shareholders' money floated the concern, and paid for splendid business premises, so they began operations. And Nucingen held in reserve founders' shares in Heaven knows what coal and argentiferous lead mines, also in a couple of canals; the shares had been given to him for bringing out the concerns. All four were in working order, well got up and popular, for they paid good dividends.

"Nucingen might, of course, count on getting the differences if the shares went up, but this formed no part of the Baron's schemes; he left the shares at sea-level on the market to tempt the fishes.

"So he had massed his securities as Napoleon massed his troops, all with a view to suspending payment in the thick of the approaching crisis of 1826-27 which revolutionized European markets. If Nucingen had had his Prince of Wagram he might have said, like Napoleon from the heights of Santon, 'Make a careful survey of the situation; on such



and such a day, at such an hour funds will be poured in at such a spot.' But in whom could he confide? Du Tillet had no suspicion of his own complicity in Nucingen's plot; and the bold Baron had learned from his previous experiments in suspensions of payment that he must have some man whom he could trust to act at need as a lever upon the creditor. Nucingen had never a nephew, he dared not take a confidant; yet he must have a devoted and intelligent Claparon, a born diplomatist with a good manner, a man worthy of him, and fit to take office under government. Such connections are not made in a day nor yet in a year. By this time Rastignac had been so thoroughly entangled by Nucingen, that being, like the Prince de la Paix, equally beloved by the King and Queen of Spain, he fancied that he (Rastignac) had secured a very valuable dupe in *Nucingen*. For a long while he had laughed at a man whose capacities he was unable to estimate; he ended in a sober, serious, and devout admiration of Nucingen, owning that Nucingen really had the power which he thought that he himself alone possessed.

"From Rastignac's introduction to society in Paris, he had been led to condemn it utterly. From the year 1820 he thought, like the Baron, that honesty was a question of appearances; he looked upon the world as a mixture of corruption and rascality of every sort. If he admitted exceptions, he condemned the mass; he put no belief in any virtue—men did right or wrong, as circumstances decided. His worldly wisdom was the work of a moment; he learned his lesson at the summit of Père-Lachaise one day when he buried a poor, good man there; it was his Delphine's father, who died deserted by his daughters and their husbands, a dupe of our society and of the truest affection. Rastignac then and there resolved to exploit this world, to wear full dress of virtue, honesty, and fine manners. He was empanoplied in selfishness. When the young scion of nobility discovered that Nucingen wore the same armor, he respected him much as some knight mounted upon a barb and arrayed in damascened steel would have respected an adversary equally well horsed and equipped at a tournament in the Middle

Ages. But for the time he had grown effeminate amid the delights of Capua. The friendship of such a woman as the Baronne de Nucingen is of a kind that sets a man abjuring egoism in all its forms.

“Delphine had been deceived once already; in her first venture of the affections she came across a piece of Birmingham manufacture, in the shape of the late lamented de Marsay; and therefore she could not but feel a limitless affection for a young provincial with all the provincial’s articles of faith. Her tenderness reacted upon Rastignac. So by the time that Nucingen had put his wife’s friend into the harness in which the expleiter always gets the exploited, he had reached the precise juncture when he (the Baron) meditated a third suspension of payment. To Rastignac he confided his position; he pointed out to Rastignac a means of making ‘reparation.’ As a consequence of his intimacy, he was expected to play the part of confederate. The Baron judged it unsafe to communicate the whole of his plot to his conjugal collaborator. Rastignac quite believed in impending disaster; and the Baron allowed him to believe further that he (Rastignac) saved the shop.

“But when there are so many threads in a skein, there are apt to be knots. Rastignac trembled for Delphine’s money. He stipulated that Delphine must be independent and her estate separated from her husband’s, swearing to himself that he would repay her by trebling her fortune. As, however, Rastignac said nothing of himself, Nucingen begged him to take, in the event of success, twenty-five shares of a thousand francs in the argentiferous lead mines, and Eugène took them—not to offend him! Nucingen had put Rastignac up to this the day before that evening in the Rue Joubert when our friend counseled Malvina to marry. A cold shiver ran through Rastignac at the sight of so many happy folk in Paris going to and fro unconscious of the impending loss; even so a young commander might shiver at the first sight of an army drawn up before a battle. He saw the d’Aiglemonts, the d’Aldrighers, and Beaudenord. Poor little Isaure and Godefroid playing at love, what were they but Acis and Galatea under the rock which

a hulking Polyphemus was about to send down upon them?"

"That monkey of a Bixiou has something almost like talent," said Blondet.

"Oh! so I am not maundering now?" asked Bixiou, enjoying his success as he looked round at his surprised auditors.—"For two months past," he continued, "Godefroid had given himself up to all the little pleasures of preparation for the marriage. At such times men are like birds building nests in spring; they come and go, pick up their bits of straw, and fly off with them in their beaks to line the nest that is to hold a brood of young birds by and by. Isaure's bridegroom had taken a house in the Rue de la Plancher at a thousand crowns, a comfortable little house neither too large nor too small, which suited them. Every morning he went round to take a look at the workmen and to superintend the painters. He had introduced 'comfort' (the only good thing in England)—heating apparatus to maintain an even temperature all over the house; fresh, soft colors, carefully chosen furniture, neither too showy nor too much in the fashion; spring blinds fitted to every window inside and out; silver plate and new carriages. He had seen to the stables, coach house, and harness room, where Toby Joby Paddy floundered and fidgeted about like a marmot let loose, apparently rejoiced to know that there would be women about the place and a 'lady'! This fervent passion of a man that sets up housekeeping, choosing clocks, going to visit his betrothed with his pockets full of patterns of stuffs, consulting her as to the bedroom furniture, going, coming, and trotting about, for love's sake,—all this, I say, is a spectacle in the highest degree calculated to rejoice the hearts of honest people, especially tradespeople. And as nothing pleases folk better than the marriage of a good-looking young fellow of seven-and-twenty and a charming girl of nineteen that dances admirably well, Godefroid in his perplexity over the *corbeille* asked Mme. de Nucingen and Rastignac to breakfast with him and advise him on this all-important point. He hit likewise on the happy idea of asking his cousin d'Aiglemont and his wife to meet them, as well

as Mme. de Sérizy. Women of the world are ready enough to join for once in an improvised breakfast-party at a bachelor's rooms."

"It is their way of playing truant," put in Blondet.

"Of course they went over the new house," resumed Bixiou. "Married women relish these little expeditions as ogres relish warm flesh; they feel young again with the young bliss, unspoiled as yet by fruition. Breakfast was served in Godefroid's sitting-room, decked out like a troop horse for a farewell to bachelor life. There were dainty little dishes such as women love to devour, nibble at, and sip of a morning, when they are usually alarmingly hungry and horribly afraid to confess to it. It would seem that a woman compromises herself by admitting that she is hungry.—'Why have you come alone?' inquired Godefroid when Rastignac appeared.—'Mme. de Nucingen is out of spirits; I will tell you all about it,' answered Rastignac, with the air of a man whose temper has been tried—'A quarrel?' hazarded Godefroid.—'No.'—At four o'clock the women took flight for the Bois de Boulogne; Rastignac stayed in the room and looked out of the window, fixing his melancholy gaze upon Toby Joby Paddy, who stood, his arms crossed in Napoleonic fashion, audaciously posted in front of Beaudenord's cab horse. The child could only control the animal with his shrill little voice, but the horse was afraid of Joby Toby.

"'Well,' began Godefroid, 'what is the matter with you, my dear fellow? You look gloomy and anxious; your gayety is forced. You are tormented by incomplete happiness. It is wretched, and that is a fact, when one cannot marry the woman one loves at the mayor's office and the church.'

"'Have you courage to hear what I have to say? I wonder whether you will see how much a man must be attached to a friend if he can be guilty of such a breach of confidence as this for his sake.'

"Something in Rastignac's voice stung like a lash of a whip.

"'What?' asked Godefroid de Beaudenord, turning pale.

“‘I was unhappy over your joy; I had not the heart to keep such a secret to myself when I saw all these preparations, your happiness in bloom.’

“‘Just say it out in three words!’

“‘Swear to me on your honor that you will be as silent as the grave——’

“‘As the grave,’ repeated Beaudenord.

“‘That if one of your nearest relatives were concerned in this secret, he should not know it.’

“‘No.’

“‘Very well. Nucingen started to-night for Brussels. He must file his schedule if he cannot arrange a settlement. This very morning Delphine petitioned for the separation of her estate. You may still save your fortune.’

“‘How?’ faltered Godefroid; the blood turned to ice in his veins.

“‘Simply write to the Baron de Nucingen, antedating your letter a fortnight, and instruct him to invest all your capital in shares.’—Rastignac suggested Claparon and Company, and continued—‘You have a fortnight, a month, possibly three months, in which to realize and make something; the shares are still going up——’

“‘But d’Aiglemont, who was here at breakfast with us, has a million in Nucingen’s bank.’

“‘Look here; I do not know whether there will be enough of these shares to cover it; and besides, I am not his friend, I cannot betray Nucingen’s confidence. You must not speak to d’Aiglemont. If you say a word, you must answer to me for the consequences.’

“Godefroid stood stockstill for ten minutes.

“‘Do you accept? Yes or no!’ said the inexorable Rastignac.

“Godefroid took up the pen, wrote at Rastignac’s dictation, and signed his name.

“‘My poor cousin!’ he cried.

“‘Each for himself,’ said Rastignac. ‘And there is one more settled!’ he added to himself as he left Beaudenord.

“While Rastignac was maneuvering thus in Paris, imagine the state of things on the Bourse. A friend of

mine, a provincial, a stupid creature, once asked me as we came past the Bourse between four and five in the afternoon what all that crowd of chatterers was doing, what they could possibly find to say to each other, and why they were wandering to and fro when business in public securities was over for the day. 'My friend,' said I, 'they have made their meal, and now they are digesting it; while they digest it, they gossip about their neighbors, or there would be no commercial security in Paris. Concerns are floated here, such and such a man—Palma, for instance, who is something the same here as Sinard at the Académie Royale des Sciences—Palma says, "Let the speculation be made" and the speculation is made.'

"What a man that Hebrew is," put in Blondet; "he has not had a university education, but a universal education. And universal does not in his case mean superficial; whatever he knows, he knows to the bottom. He has a genius, an intuitive faculty for business. He is the oracle of all the lynxes that rule the Paris market; they will not touch an investment until Palma has looked into it. He looks solemn, he listens, ponders, and reflects; his interlocutor thinks that after this consideration he has come round his man, till Palma says, 'This will not do for me.'—The most extraordinary thing about Palma, to my mind, is the fact that he and Werbrust were partners for ten years, and there was never the shadow of a disagreement between them."

"That is the way with the very strong or the very weak; any two between the extremes fall out and lose no time in making enemies of each other," said Couture.

"Nucingen, you see, had neatly and skillfully put a little bombshell under the colonnades of the Bourse, and towards four o'clock in the afternoon it exploded.—'Here is something serious; have you heard the news?' asked du Tillet, drawing Werbrust into a corner. 'Here is Nucingen gone off to Brussels, and his wife petitioning for the separation of her estate.'

"'Are you and he in it together for a liquidation?' asked Werbrust, smiling.

"'No foolery, Werbrust,' said du Tillet. 'You know the

holders of his paper. Now, look here. There is business in it. Shares in this new concern of ours have gone up twenty per cent. already; they will go up to five-and-twenty by the end of the quarter; you know why. They are going to pay a splendid dividend.'

"'Sly dog,' said Werbrust. 'Get along with you; you are a devil with long and sharp claws, and you have them deep in the butter.'

"'Just let me speak, or we shall not have time to operate. I hit on the idea as soon as I heard the news. I positively saw Mme. de Nucingen crying; she is afraid for her fortune.'

"'Poor little thing!' said the old Alsatian Jew, with an ironical expression. 'Well?' he added, as du Tillet was silent.

"'Well. At my place I have a thousand shares of a thousand francs in our concern; Nucingen handed them over to me to put on the market, do you understand? Good. Now let us buy up a million of Nucingen's paper at a discount of ten or twenty per cent., and we shall make a handsome percentage out of it. We shall be debtors and creditors both; confusion will be worked! But we must set about it carefully, or the holders may imagine that we are operating in Nucingen's interests.'

"Then Werbrust understood. He squeezed du Tillet's hand with an expression such as a woman's face wears when she is playing her neighbor a trick.

"Martin Falleix came up.—'Well, have you heard the news?' he asked. 'Nucingen has stopped payment.'

"'Pooh,' said Werbrust, 'pray don't noise it about; give those that hold his paper a chance.'

"'What is the cause of the smash; do you know?' put in Claparon.

"'You know nothing about it,' said du Tillet. 'There isn't any smash. Payment will be made in full. Nucingen will start again; I shall find him all the money he wants. I know the causes of the suspension. He put all his capital into Mexican securities, and they are sending him metal in return; old Spanish cannon cast in such an insane fashion

that they melted down gold and bell-metal and church plate for it, and all the wreck of the Spanish dominion in the Indies. The specie is slow in coming, and the dear Baron is hard up. That is all.'

"'It is a fact,' said Werbrust; 'I am taking his paper myself at twenty per cent. discount.'

"The news spread swift as fire in a straw rick. The most contradictory reports got about. But such confidence was felt in the firm after the two previous suspensions, that everyone stuck to Nucingen's paper. 'Palma must lend us a hand,' said Werbrust.

"Now Palma was the Kellers' oracle, and the Kellers were brimful of Nucingen's paper. A hint from Palma would be enough. Werbrust arranged with Palma, and he rang the alarm bell. There was a panic next day on the Bourse. The Kellers, acting on Palma's advice, let go Nucingen's paper at ten per cent. of loss; they set the example on 'Change, for they were supposed to know very well what they were about. Taillefer followed up with three hundred thousand francs at a discount of twenty per cent., and Martin Falleix with two hundred thousand at fifteen. Gigonnet saw what was going on. He helped to spread the panic, with a view to buying up Nucingen's paper himself and making a commission of two or three per cent. out of Werbrust.

"In a corner of the Bourse he came upon poor Matifat, who had three hundred thousand francs in Nucingen's bank. Matifat, ghastly and haggard, beheld the terrible Gigonnet, the bill-discounter of his old quarter, coming up to worry him. He shuddered in spite of himself.

"'Things are looking bad. There is a crisis on hand. Nucingen is compounding with his creditors. But this does not interest you, Daddy Matifat; you are out of business.'

"'Oh, well, you are mistaken, Gigonnet; I am in for three hundred thousand francs. I meant to speculate in Spanish bonds.'

"'Then you have saved your money. Spanish bonds would have swept everything away; whereas I am prepared



to offer you something like fifty per cent. for your account with Nucingen.'

" 'I would rather wait for the composition,' said Matifat; 'I never knew a banker yet that paid less than fifty per cent. Ah, if it were only a matter of ten per cent. of loss——' added the retired man of drugs.

" 'Well, will you take fifteen?' asked Gigonnet.

" 'You are very keen about it, it seems to me,' said Matifat.

" 'Good-night.'

" 'Will you take twelve?'

" 'Done,' said Gigonnet.

" Before night two millions had been bought up in the names of the three chance-united confederates, and posted by du Tillet to the debit side of Nucingen's account. Next day they drew their premium.

" The dainty little old Baroness d'Aldrigger was at breakfast with her two daughters and Godefroid, when Rastignac came in with a diplomatic air to steer the conversation on the financial crisis. The Baron de Nucingen felt a lively regard for the d'Aldrigger family; he was prepared, if things went amiss, to cover the Baroness's account with his best securities, to wit, some shares in the argentiferous lead mines, but the application must come from the lady.

" 'Poor Nucingen!' said the Baroness. 'What can have become of him?'

" 'He is in Belgium. His wife is petitioning for a separation of her property; but he has gone to see if he can arrange with some bankers to see him through.'

" 'Dear me! That reminds me of my poor husband! Dear M. de Rastignac, how you must feel this, so attached as you are to the house!'

" 'If all the indifferent are covered, his personal friends will be rewarded later on. He will pull through; he is a clever man.'

" 'An honest man, above all things,' said the Baroness.

" A month later, Nucingen met all his liabilities, with no formalities beyond the letters by which creditors signified the investments which they preferred to take in exchange

for their capital; and with no action on the part of other banks beyond registering the transfer of Nucingen's paper for the investments in favor.

"While du Tillet, Werbrust, Claparon, Gigonnet, and others that thought themselves clever were fetching in Nucingen's paper from abroad with a premium of one per cent.—for it was still worth their while to exchange it for securities in a rising market—there was all the more talk on the Bourse, because there was nothing now to fear. They babbled over Nucingen; he was discussed and judged; they even slandered him. His luxurious life, his enterprises! When a man has so much on his hands, he overreaches himself, and so forth, and so forth.

"The talk was at its height, when several people were greatly astonished to receive letters from Geneva, Basel, Milan, Naples, Genoa, Marseilles, and London, in which their correspondents, previously advised of the failure, informed them that somebody was offering one per cent. for Nucingen's paper! 'There is something up,' said the lynxes of the Bourse.

"The Court meanwhile had granted the application for Mme. de Nucingen's separation as to her estate, and the question became still more complicated. The newspapers announced the return of M. le Baron de Nucingen from a journey to Belgium; he had been arranging, it was said, with a well-known Belgian firm to resume the working of some coal-pits in the Bois de Bossut. The Baron himself appeared on the course, and never even took the trouble to contradict the slanders circulating against him. He scorned to reply through the press; he simply bought a splendid estate just outside Paris for two millions of francs. Six weeks afterwards, the Bordeaux shipping intelligence announced that two vessels with cargoes of bullion to the amount of seven millions, consigned to the firm of Nucingen, were lying in the river.

"Then it was plain to Palma, Werbrust, and du Tillet that the trick had been played. Nobody else was any the wiser. The three scholars studied the means by which the great bubble had been created, saw that it had been prepar-

ing for eleven months, and pronounced Nucingen the greatest financier in Europe.

"Rastignac understood nothing of all this, but he had the four hundred thousand francs which Nucingen had allowed him to shear from the Parisian sheep, and he portioned his sisters. D'Aiglemont, at a hint from his cousin Beaudenord, besought Rastignac to accept ten per cent. upon his million if he would undertake to convert it into shares in a canal which is still to make, for Nucingen worked things with the Government to such purpose that the concessionaries find it to their interest not to finish their scheme. Charles Grandet implored Delphine's lover to use his interest to secure shares for him in exchange for his cash. And altogether Rastignac played the part of Law for ten days; he had the prettiest duchesses in France praying him to allot shares to them, and to-day the young man very likely has an income of forty thousand livres, derived in the first instance from the argentiferous lead mines."

"If everyone was better off, who can have lost?" asked Finot.

"Hear the conclusion," rejoined Bixiou. "The Marquis d'Aiglemont and Beaudenord (I put them forward as two examples out of many) kept their allotted shares, enticed by the so-called dividend that fell due a few months afterwards. They had another three per cent. on their capital, they sang Nucingen's praises, and took his part at a time when everybody suspected that he was going bankrupt. Godefroid married his beloved Isaure and took shares in the mines to the value of a hundred thousand francs. The Nucingens gave a ball even more splendid than people expected of them on the occasion of the wedding; Delphine's present to the bride was a charming set of rubies. Isaure danced, a happy wife, a girl no longer. The little Baroness was more than ever a Shepherdess of the Alps. The ball was at its height when Malvina, the Andalousse of Musset's poem, heard du Tillet's voice dryly advising her to take Desroches. Desroches, warmed to the right degree by Rastignac and Nucingen, tried to come to an understanding financially; but at the first hint of shares in the mines for the bride's

portion, he broke off and went back to the Matifats in the Rue du Cherche-Midi, only to find the accursed canal shares which Gigonnet had foisted on Matifat in lieu of cash.

"They had not long to wait for the crash. The firm of Claparon did business on too large a scale, the capital was locked up, the concern ceased to serve its purposes, or to pay dividends, though the speculations were sound. These misfortunes coincided with the events of 1827. In 1829 it was too well known that Claparon was a man of straw set up by the two giants; he fell from his pedestal. Shares that had fetched twelve hundred and fifty francs fell to four hundred, though intrinsically they were worth six. Nucingen, knowing their value, bought them up at four.

"Meanwhile the little Baroness d'Aldrigger had sold out of the mines that paid no dividends, and Godefroid had re-invested the money belonging to his wife and her mother in Claparon's concern. Debts compelled them to realize when the shares were at their lowest, so that of seven hundred thousand francs only two hundred thousand remained. They made a clearance, and all that was left was prudently invested in the three per cents. at seventy-five. Godefroid, the sometime gay and careless bachelor who had lived without taking thought all his life long, found himself saddled with a little goose of a wife totally unfitted to bear adversity (indeed, before six months were over, he had witnessed the anserine transformation of his beloved), to say nothing of a mother-in-law whose mind ran on pretty dresses while she had not bread to eat. The two families must live together to live at all. It was only by stirring up all his considerably chilled interest that Godefroid got a post in the audit department. His friends?—They were out of town. His relatives?—All astonishment and promises. 'What! my dear boy! Oh! count upon me! Poor fellow!' and Beaudenord was clean forgotten fifteen minutes afterwards. He owed his place to Nucingen and de Vandenesse.

"And to-day these so estimable and unfortunate people are living on a third floor (not counting the entresol) in the Rue du Mont Thabor. Malvina, the Adolphus's pearl

of a granddaughter, has not a farthing. She gives music lessons, not to be a burden upon her brother-in-law. You may see a tall, dark, thin, withered woman, like a mummy escaped from Passalacqua's, about afoot through the streets of Paris. In 1830 Beaudenord lost his situation just as his wife presented him with a fourth child. A family of eight and two servants (Wirth and his wife) and an income of eight thousand livres. And at this moment the mines are paying so well, that an original share of a thousand francs brings in a dividend of cent. per cent.

"Rastignac and Mme. de Nucingen bought the shares sold by the Baroness and Godefroid. The Revolution made a peer of France of Nucingen and a Grand Officer of the Legion of Honor. He has not stopped payment since 1830, but still I hear that he has something like seventeen millions. He put faith in the Ordinances of July, sold out of all his investments, and boldly put his money into the Funds when the three per cents. stood at forty-five. He persuaded the Tuileries that this was done out of devotion, and about the same time he and du Tillet between them swallowed down three millions belonging to that great scamp Philippe Bridau.

"Quite lately our Baron was walking along the Rue de Rivoli on his way to the Bois when he met the Baroness d'Aldrigger under the colonnade. The little old lady wore a tiny green bonnet with a rose-colored lining, a flowered gown, and a mantilla; altogether, she was more than ever the Shepherdess of the Alps. She could no more be made to understand the causes of her poverty than the sources of her wealth. As she went along, leaning upon poor Malvina, that model of heroic devotion, she seemed to be the young girl and Malvina the old mother. Wirth followed them, carrying an umbrella.

"'Dere are beoples whose vordune I vound it imbossible to make,' said the Baron, addressing his companion (M. Cointet, a cabinet minister). 'Now dot de baroxysm off brincibles haf bassed off, chust reinshtate dot boor Peaute-nord.'

"So Beaudenord went back to his desk, thanks to Nu-

cingen's good offices; and the d'Aldriggers extol Nucingen as a hero of friendship, for he always sends the little Shepherdess of the Alps and her daughters invitations to his balls. No creature whatsoever can be made to understand that the Baron yonder three times did his best to plunder the public without breaking the letter of the law, and enriched people in spite of himself. No one has a word to say against him. If anybody should suggest that a big capitalist often is another word for a cut-throat, it would be a most egregious calumny. If stocks rise and fall, if property improves and depreciates, the fluctuations of the market are caused by a common movement, a something in the air, a tide in the affairs of men subject like other tides to lunar influences. The great Arago is much to blame for giving us no scientific theory to account for this important phenomenon. The only outcome of all this is an axiom which I have never seen anywhere in print——"

"And that is?"

"The debtor is more than a match for the creditor."

"Oh!" said Blondet. "For my own part, all that we have been saying seems to me to be a paraphrase of the epigram in which Montesquieu summed up *l'Esprit des Loix*."

"What?" said Finot.

"Laws are like spiders' webs; the big flies get through, while the little ones are caught."

"Then, what are you for?" asked Finot.

"For absolute government, the only kind of government under which enterprises against the spirit of the law can be put down. Yes. Arbitrary rule is the salvation of a country when it comes to the support of justice, for the right of mercy is strictly one-sided. The king can pardon a fraudulent bankrupt; he cannot do anything for the victims. The letter of the law is fatal to modern society."

"Just get that into the electors' heads!" said Bixiou.

"Someone has undertaken to do it."

"Who?"

"Time. As the Bishop of Leon said, 'Liberty is ancient,

but kingship is eternal;’ any nation in its right mind returns to monarchical government in one form or another.”

“I say, there was somebody next door,” said Finot, hearing us rise to go.

“There always is somebody next door,” retorted Bixiou. But he must have been drunk.

**PARIS, November 1837.**

**ALBERT SAVARUS**





## PREFACE

*Albert Savarus*, with its enshrined story of "L'Ambitieux par Amour" (something of an oddity for Balzac, who often puts a story within a story, but less formally than this), contains various appeals, and shews not a few of its author's well-known interests in politics, in affairs, in newspapers, not to mention the enumerations of *dots* and fortunes which he never could refuse himself. The affection of Savarus for the Duchesse d'Argaiolo may interest different persons differently. It seems to me a little *fade*. But the character of Rosalie de Watteville is in a very different rank. Here only, except, perhaps, in the case of Mlle. de Verneuil, whose unlucky experiences had emancipated her, has Balzac depicted a girl full of character, individuality, and life. It was apparently necessary that Rosalie should be made not wholly amiable in order to obtain this accession of wits and force, and to be freed from the fatal gift of *candeur*, the curse of the French *ingénue*. Her creator has also thought proper to punish her further, and cruelly, at the end of the book. Nevertheless, though her story may be less interesting than either of theirs, it is impossible not to put her in a much higher rank as a heroine than either Eugénie or Ursule, and not to wish that Balzac had included the conception of her in a more important structure of fiction.

*Albert Savarus* appeared in sixty headed chapters in the *Siècle* for May and June 1842, and then assumed its place in the *Comédie*. But though left there, it also formed part of a two-volume issue by Souverain in 1844, in company with *La Muse du Département*. "Rosalie" was at first named "Philomène."

G. S.



## ALBERT SAVARUS

*To M<sup>me</sup>. Émile Girardin.*

ONE of the few drawing-rooms where, under the Restoration, the Archbishop of Besançon was sometimes to be seen, was that of the Baronne de Watteville, to whom he was particularly attached on account of her religious sentiments.

A word as to this lady, the most important lady of Besançon.

M. de Watteville, a descendant of the famous Watteville, the most successful and illustrious of murderers and renegades—his extraordinary adventures are too much a part of history to be related here—this nineteenth century M. de Watteville was as gentle and peaceable as his ancestor of the *Grand Siècle* had been passionate and turbulent. After living in the Comté<sup>1</sup> like a wood-louse in the crack of a wainscot, he had married the heiress of the celebrated house of Rupt. Mlle. de Rupt brought twenty thousand francs a year in the Funds to add to the ten thousand francs a year in real estate of the Baron de Watteville. The Swiss gentleman's coat-of-arms (the Wattevilles are Swiss) was then borne as an escutcheon of pretense on the old shield of the Rupts. The marriage, arranged in 1802, was solemnized in 1815 after the second Restoration. Within three years of the birth of a daughter all Mme. de Watteville's grandparents were dead, and their estates wound up. M. de Watteville's house was then sold, and they settled in the Rue de la Préfecture in the fine old mansion of the Rupts, with an immense garden stretching to the Rue du Perron. Mme. de Watteville, devout as a girl, became even more so after her marriage. She is one of the queens of the saintly brotherhood which gives the upper circles of Besançon a solemn air and prudish manners in harmony with the character of the town.

<sup>1</sup> La Franche Comté.

M. le Baron de Watteville, a dry, lean man, devoid of intelligence, looked worn out without anyone knowing whereby, for he enjoyed the profoundest ignorance; but as his wife was a red-haired woman, and of a stern nature that became proverbial (we will say "as sharp as Mme. de Watteville"), some wits of the legal profession declared that he had been worn against that rock—*Rupt* is obviously derived from *rupes*. Scientific students of social phenomena will not fail to have observed that Rosalie was the only offspring of the union between the Wattevilles and the Rupts.

M. de Watteville spent his existence in a handsome workshop with a lathe; he was a turner! As subsidiary to this pursuit, he took up a fancy for making collections. Philosophical doctors, devoted to the study of madness, regard this tendency towards collecting as a first degree of mental aberration when it is set on small things. The Baron de Watteville treasured shells and geological fragments of the neighborhood of Besançon. Some contradictory folk, especially women, would say of M. de Watteville, "He has a noble soul! He perceived from the first days of his married life that he would never be his wife's master, so he threw himself into a mechanical occupation and good living."

The house of the Rupts was not devoid of a certain magnificence worthy of Louis XIV., and bore traces of the nobility of the two families who had mingled in 1815. The chandeliers of glass cut in the shape of leaves, the brocades, the damask, the carpets, the gilt furniture, were all in harmony with the old liveries and the old servants. Though served in blackened family plate, round a looking-glass tray furnished with Dresden china, the food was exquisite. The wines selected by M. de Watteville, who, to occupy his time and vary his employments, was his own butler, enjoyed a sort of fame throughout the department. Mme. de Watteville's fortune was a fine one; while her husband's, which consisted only of the estate of Rouxey, worth about ten thousand francs a year, was not increased by inheritance. It is needless to add that in consequence of Mme. de Watteville's close intimacy with the Archbishop, the three or four clever or remarkable Abbés of the diocese who were

not averse to good feeding were very much at home at her house.

At a ceremonial dinner given in honor of I know not whose wedding, at the beginning of September 1834, when the women were standing in a circle round the drawing-room fire, and the men in groups by the windows, everyone exclaimed with pleasure at the entrance of M. l'Abbé de Grancey, who was announced.

"Well, and the lawsuit?" they all cried.

"Won!" replied the Vicar-General. "The verdict of the Court, from which we had no hope, you know why——"

This was an allusion to the members of the First Court of Appeal of 1830; the Legitimists had almost all withdrawn.

"The verdict is in our favor on every point, and reverses the decision of the Lower Court."

"Everybody thought you were done for."

"And we should have been, but for me. I told our advocate to be off to Paris, and at the crucial moment I was able to secure a new pleader, to whom we owe our victory, a wonderful man——"

"At Besançon?" said M. de Watteville, guilelessly.

"At Besançon," replied the Abbé de Grancey.

"Oh yes, Savaron," said a handsome young man sitting near the Baroness, and named de Soulas.

"He spent five or six nights over it; he devoured documents and briefs; he had seven or eight interviews of several hours with me," continued M. de Grancey, who had just reappeared at the Hôtel de Rupt for the first time in three weeks. "In short, M. Savaron has just completely beaten the celebrated lawyer whom our adversaries had sent for from Paris. This young man is wonderful, the bigwigs say. Thus the Chapter is twice victorious; it has triumphed in law and also in politics, since it has vanquished Liberalism in the person of the Counsel of our Municipality.—'Our adversaries', so our advocate said, 'must not expect to find readiness on all sides to ruin the Archbishoprics.'—The President was obliged to enforce silence. All the townsfolk of Besançon applauded. Thus the possession of the buildings

of the old convent remains with the Chapter of the Cathedral of Besançon. M. Savaron, however, invited his Parisian opponent to dine with him as they came out of court. He accepted, saying, 'Honor to every conqueror,' and complimented him on his success without bitterness."

"And where did you unearth this lawyer?" said Mme. de Watteville. "I never heard his name before."

"Why, you can see his windows from hence," replied the Vicar-General. "M. Savaron lives in the Rue du Perron; the garden of his house joins on to yours."

"But he is not a native of the Comté," said M. de Watteville.

"So little is he a native of any place that no one knows where he comes from," said Mme. de Chavoncourt.

"But who is he?" asked Mme. de Watteville, taking the Abbé's arm to go into the dining-room. "If he is a stranger, by what chance has he settled at Besançon? It is a strange fancy for a barrister."

"Very strange!" echoed Amédée de Soulas, whose biography is here necessary to the understanding of this tale.

In all ages France and England have carried on an exchange of trifles, which is all the more constant because it evades the tyranny of the custom-house. The fashion that is called English in Paris is called French in London, and this is reciprocal. The hostility of the two nations is suspended on two points—the uses of words and the fashion of dress. *God save the King*, the national air of England, is a tune written by Lulli for the chorus of *Esther* or of *Athalie*. Hoops, introduced at Paris by an Englishwoman, were invented in London, it is known why, by a Frenchwoman, the notorious Duchess of Portsmouth. They were at first so jeered at that the first Englishwoman who appeared in them at the Tuileries narrowly escaped being crushed by the crowd, but they were adopted. This fashion tyrannized over the ladies of Europe for half a century. At the peace of 1815, for a year, the long waists of the English were a standing jest; all Paris went to see Pothier and Brunet in *Les Anglaises pour Rire*; but in 1816 and 1817

the belt of the Frenchwoman, which in 1814 cut her across the bosom, gradually descended till it reached the hips.

Within ten years England has made two little gifts to our language. The *Incroyable*, the *Merveilleux*, the *Élégant*, the three successors of the *petit-maitre* of discreditable etymology, have made way for the "daudy" and the "lion." The *lion* is not the parent of the *lionne*. The *lionne* is due to the famous song by Alfred de Musset:—

*"Arçez-vous vu dans Barcelone*

*C'est ma maitresse et ma lionne."*

There has been a fusion—or, if you prefer it, a confusion—of the two words and the leading ideas. When an absurdity can amuse Paris, which devours as many masterpieces as absurdities, the provinces can hardly be deprived of them. So, as soon as the *lion* paraded Paris with his mane, his beard and mustaches, his waistcoats and his eyeglass, maintained in its place, without the help of his hands, by the contraction of his cheek and eye-socket, the chief towns of some departments had their sub-*lions*, who protested by the smartness of their trousers-straps against the untidiness of their fellow-townsmen.

Thus, in 1834, Besançon could boast of a *lion*, in the person of M. Amédée-Sylvain de Soulas, spelt Souleyas at the time of the Spanish occupation. Amédée de Soulas is perhaps the only man in Besançon descended from a Spanish family. Spain sent men to manage her business in the Comté, but very few Spaniards settled there. The Soulas remained in consequence of their connection with Cardinal Granvelle. Young M. de Soulas was always talking of leaving Besançon, a dull town, church-going, and not literary, a military center and garrison town, of which the manners and customs and physiognomy are worth describing. This opinion allowed of his lodging, like a man uncertain of the future, in three very scantily furnished rooms at the end of the Rue Neuve, just where it opens into the Rue de la Préfecture.

Young M. de Soulas could not possibly live without a tiger. This tiger was the son of one of his farmers, a small



servant aged fourteen, thick-set, and named Babylas. The *lion* dressed his tiger very smartly—a short tunic coat of iron-gray cloth, belted with patent leather, bright blue plush breeches, a red waistcoat, polished leather top-boots, a shiny hat with black lacing, and brass buttons with the arms of Soulas. Amédée gave this boy white cotton gloves and his washing, and thirty-six francs a month to keep himself—a sum that seemed enormous to the grisettes of Besançon: four hundred and twenty francs a year to a child of fifteen, without counting extras! The extras consisted in the price for which he could sell his turned clothes, a present when Soulas exchanged one of his horses, and the perquisite of the manure. The two horses, treated with sordid economy, cost, one with another, eight hundred francs a year. His bills for articles received from Paris, such as perfumery, cravats, jewelry, patent blacking, and clothes, ran to another twelve hundred francs. Add to this the groom, or tiger, the horses, a very superior style of dress, and six hundred francs a year for rent, and you will see a grand total of three thousand francs.

Now, M. de Soulas's father had left him only four thousand francs a year, the income from some cottage farms in rather bad repair, which required keeping up, a charge which lent painful uncertainty to the rents. The *lion* had hardly three francs a day left for food, amusements, and gambling. He very often dined out, and breakfasted with remarkable frugality. When he was positively obliged to dine at his own cost, he sent his tiger to fetch a couple of dishes from a cookshop, never spending more than twenty-five sous.

Young M. de Soulas was supposed to be a spendthrift, recklessly extravagant, whereas the poor man made the two ends meet in the year with a keenness and skill which would have done honor to a thrifty housewife. At Besançon in those days no one knew how great a tax on a man's capital were six francs spent in polish to spread on his boots or shoes, yellow gloves at fifty sous a pair, cleaned in the deepest secrecy to make them three times renewed, cravats costing ten francs, and lasting three months, four waistcoats at twenty-five francs, and trousers fitting close to the boots.

How could he do otherwise, since we see women in Paris bestowing their special attention on simpletons who visit them, and cut out the most remarkable men by means of these frivolous advantages, which a man can buy for fifteen louis, and get his hair curled and a fine linen shirt into the bargain?

If this unhappy youth should seem to you to have become a *lion* on very cheap terms, you must know that Amédée de Soulas had been three times to Switzerland, by coach and in short stages, twice to Paris, and once from Paris to England. He passed as a well-informed traveler, and could say, "In England, where I went . . ." The dowagers of the town would say to him, "You, who have been in England . . ." He had been as far as Lombardy, and seen the shores of the Italian lakes. He read new books. Finally, when he was cleaning his gloves, the tiger Babylas replied to callers, "Monsieur is very busy." An attempt had been made to withdraw M. Amédée de Soulas from circulation by pronouncing him "A man of advanced ideas." Amédée had the gift of uttering with the gravity of a native the common-places that were in fashion, which gave him the credit of being one of the most enlightened of the nobility. His person was garnished with fashionable trinkets, and his head furnished with ideas hall-marked by the press.

In 1834 Amédée was a young man of five and twenty, of medium height, dark, with a very prominent thorax, well-made shoulders, rather plump legs, feet already fat, white dimpled hands, a beard under his chin, mustaches worthy of the garrison, a good-natured, fat, rubicund face, a flat nose, and brown expressionless eyes; nothing Spanish about him. He was progressing rapidly in the direction of obesity, which would be fatal to his pretensions. His nails were well kept, his beard trimmed, the smallest details of his dress attended to with English precision. Hence Amédée de Soulas was looked upon as the finest man in Besançon. A hairdresser who waited upon him at a fixed hour—another luxury, costing sixty francs a year—held him up as the sovereign authority in matters of fashion and elegance.

Amédée slept late, dressed and went out towards noon, to go to one of his farms and practice pistol-shooting. He

attached as much importance to this exercise as Lord Byron did in his later days. Then, at three o'clock he came home, admired on horseback by the grisettes and the ladies who happened to be at their windows. After an affectation of study or business, which seemed to engage him till four, he dressed to dine out, spent the evening in the drawing-rooms of the aristocracy of Besançon playing whist, and went home to bed at eleven. No life could be more aboveboard, more prudent, or more irreproachable, for he punctually attended the services at church on Sundays and holy days.

To enable you to understand how exceptional is such a life, it is necessary to devote a few words to an account of Besançon. No town ever offered more deaf and dumb resistance to progress. At Besançon, the officials, the employés, the military, in short, everyone engaged in governing it, sent thither from Paris to fill a post of any kind, are all spoken of by the expressive general name of *the Colony*. The colony is neutral ground, the only ground where, as in church, the upper rank and the townfolk of the place can meet. Here, fired by a word, a look, or gesture, are started those feuds between house and house, between a woman of rank and a citizen's wife, which endure till death, and widen the impassable gulf which parts the two classes of society. With the exception of the Clermont-Mont-Saint-Jean, the Beauffremont, the de Scey, and the Gramont families, with a few others who come only to stay on their estates in the Comté, the aristocracy of Besançon dates no further back than a couple of centuries, the time of the conquest by Louis XIV. This little world is essentially of the Parlement, and arrogant, stiff, solemn, uncompromising, haughty beyond all comparison, even with the Court of Vienna, for in this the nobility of Besançon would put the Viennese drawing-rooms to shame. As to Victor Hugo, Nodier, Fourier, the glories of the town, they are never mentioned, no one thinks about them. The marriages in these families are arranged in the cradle, so rigidly are the greatest things settled as well as the smallest. No stranger, no intruder, ever finds his way into one of these houses, and to obtain an introduction for the colonels or officers of title belonging to the first families

in France when quartered there, requires efforts of diplomacy which Prince Talleyrand would gladly have mastered to use at a congress.

In 1834 Amédée was the only man in Besançon who wore trousers-straps; this will account for the young man's being regarded as a lion. And a little anecdote will enable you to understand the city of Besançon.

Some time before the opening of this story, the need arose at the Préfecture for bringing an editor from Paris for the official newspaper, to enable it to hold its own against the little *Gazette*, dropped at Besançon by the great *Gazette*, and the *Patriot*, which frisked in the hands of the Republicans. Paris sent then a young man, knowing nothing about La Franche Comté, who began by writing them a leading article of the school of the *Charivari*. The chief of the moderate party, a member of the municipal council, sent for the journalist and said to him: "You must understand, monsieur, that we are serious, more than serious—tiresome; we resent being amused, and are furious at having been made to laugh. Be as hard of digestion as the toughest disquisitions in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and you will hardly reach the level of Besançon."

The editor took the hint, and thenceforth spoke the most incomprehensible philosophical lingo. His success was complete.

If young M. de Soulas did not fall in the esteem of Besançon society, it was out of pure vanity on its part; the aristocracy were happy to affect a modern air, and to be able to show any Parisians of rank who visited the Comté a young man who bore some likeness to them.

All this hidden labor, all this dust thrown in people's eyes, this display of folly and latent prudence, had an object, or the lion of Besançon would have been no son of the soil. Amédée wanted to achieve a good marriage by proving some day that his farms were not mortgaged, and that he had some savings. He wanted to be the talk of the town, to be the finest and best-dressed man there, in order to win first the attention, and then the hand, of Mlle. Rosalie de Watteville.

In 1830, at the time when young M. de Soulas was set-

ting up in business as a dandy, Rosalie was but fourteen. Hence, in 1834, Mlle. de Watteville had reached the age when young persons are easily struck by the peculiarities which attracted the attention of the town to Amédée. There are many *lions* who become *lions* out of self-interest and speculation. The Wattevilles, who for twelve years had been drawing an income of fifty thousand francs, did not spend more than four-and-twenty thousand francs a year, while receiving all the upper circle of Besançon every Monday and Friday. On Monday they gave a dinner, on Fridays an evening party. Thus, in twelve years, what a sum must have accumulated from twenty-six thousand francs a year, saved and invested with the judgment that distinguishes those old families! It was very generally supposed that Mme. de Watteville, thinking she had land enough, had placed her savings in the three per cents., in 1830. Rosalie's dowry would therefore, as the best informed opined, amount to about twenty thousand francs a year. So for the last five years Amédée had worked like a mole to get into the highest favor of the severe Baroness, while laying himself out to flatter Mlle. de Watteville's conceit.

Mme. de Watteville was in the secret of the devices by which Amédée succeeded in keeping up his rank in Besançon, and esteemed him highly for it. Soulas had placed himself under her wing when she was thirty, and at that time had dared to admire her and make her his idol; he had got so far as to be allowed—he alone in the world—to pour out to her all the unseemly gossip which almost all very precise women love to hear, being authorized by their superior virtue to look into the gulf without falling, and into the Devil's snares without being caught. Do you understand why the *lion* did not allow himself the very smallest intrigue? He lived a public life, in the street so to speak, on purpose to play the part of a lover sacrificed to duty by the Baroness, and to feast her mind with the sins she had forbidden to her senses. A man who is so privileged as to be allowed to pour light stories into the ear of a bigot is in her eyes a charming man. If this exemplary youth had better known the human heart, he might without risk have allowed himself some flirta-

tions among the grisettes of Besançon who looked up to him as a king; his affairs might perhaps have been all the more hopeful with the solicit and prudish Baroness. To Rosalie our Cato affected prodigality: he professed a life of elegance, showing her in perspective the splendid part played by a woman of fashion in Paris, whither he meant to go as deputy.

All these maneuvers were crowned with complete success. In 1834 the mothers of the forty noble families composing the high society of Besançon quoted M. Amédée de Soulas as the most charming young man in the town; no one would have dared to dispute his place as cock of the walk at the Hôtel de Rupt, and all Besançon regarded him as Rosalie de Watteville's future husband. There had even been some exchange of ideas on the subject between the Baroness and Amédée, to which the Baron's apparent nonentity gave some certainty.

Mlle. de Watteville, to whom her enormous prospective fortune at that time lent considerable importance, had been brought up exclusively within the precincts of the Hôtel de Rupt—which her mother rarely quitted, so devoted was she to her dear Archbishop—and severely repressed by an exclusively religious education, and by her mother's despotism, which held her rigidly to principles. Rosalie knew absolutely nothing. Is it knowledge to have learned geography from Guthrie, sacred history, ancient history, the history of France, and the four rules, all passed through the sieve of an old Jesuit? Dancing and music were forbidden, as being more likely to corrupt life than to grace it. The Baroness taught her daughter every conceivable stitch in tapestry and women's work—plain sewing, embroidery, netting. At seventeen Rosalie had never read anything but the *Lettres Édifiantes*, and some works on heraldry. No newspaper had ever defiled her sight. She attended Mass at the Cathedral every morning, taken there by her mother, came back to breakfast, did needlework after a little walk in the garden, and received visitors, sitting with the Baroness until dinner-time. Then, after dinner, excepting on Mondays and Fridays, she accompanied Mme. de Watteville to other houses

to spend the evening, without being allowed to talk more than the maternal rule permitted.

At eighteen Mlle. de Watteville was a slight, thin girl with a flat figure, fair, colorless, and insignificant to the last degree. Her eyes, of a very light blue, borrowed beauty from their lashes, which, when downcast, threw a shadow on her cheeks. A few freckles marred the whiteness of her forehead, which was shapely enough. Her face was exactly like those of Albert Dürer's saints, or those of the painters before Perugino; the same plump, though slender modeling, the same delicacy saddened by ecstasy, the same severe guilelessness. Everything about her, even to her attitude, was suggestive of those virgins, whose beauty is only revealed in its mystical radiance to the eyes of the studious connoisseur. She had fine hands though red, and a pretty foot, the foot of an aristocrat.

She habitually wore simple checked cotton dresses; but on Sundays and in the evening her mother allowed her silk. The cut of her frocks, made at Besançon, almost made her ugly, while her mother tried to borrow grace, beauty, and elegance from Paris fashions; for through M. de Soulas she procured the smallest trifles of her dress from thence. Rosalie had never worn a pair of silk stockings or thin boots, but always cotton stockings and leather shoes. On high days she was dressed in a muslin frock, her hair plainly dressed, and had bronze kid shoes.

This education, and her own modest demeanor, hid in Rosalie a spirit of iron. Physiologists and profound observers will tell you, perhaps to your great astonishment, that tempers, characteristics, wit, or genius reappear in families at long intervals, precisely like what are known as hereditary diseases. Thus talent, like the gout, sometimes skips over two generations. We have an illustrious example of this phenomenon in George Sand, in whom are resuscitated the force, the power, and the imaginative faculty of the Maréchal de Saxe, whose natural grand-daughter she is.

The decisive character and romantic daring of the famous Watteville had reappeared in the soul of his grand-niece, reinforced by the tenacity and pride of blood of the Rupts.

But these qualities—or faults, if you will have it so—were as deeply buried in this young girlish soul, apparently so weak and yielding, as the seething lavas within a hill before it becomes a volcano. Mme. de Watteville alone, perhaps, suspected this inheritance from two strains. She was so severe to her Rosalie that she replied one day to the Archbishop, who blamed her for being too hard on the child: “Leave me to manage her, monsieur. I know her! She has more than one Beelzebub in her skin!”

The Baroness kept all the keener watch over her daughter, because she considered her honor as a mother to be at stake. After all, she had nothing else to do. Clotilde de Rupt, at this time five and thirty, and as good as widowed, with a husband who turned egg-cups in every variety of wood, who set his mind on making wheels with six spokes out of iron-wood, and manufactured snuff-boxes for every one of his acquaintance, flirted in strict propriety with Amédée de Soulas. When this young man was in the house, she alternately dismissed and recalled her daughter, and tried to detect symptoms of jealousy in that youthful soul, so as to have occasion to repress them. She imitated the police in its dealings with the Republicans; but she labored in vain. Rosalie showed no symptoms of rebellion. Then the arid bigot accused her daughter of perfect insensibility. Rosalie knew her mother well enough to be sure that if she had thought young M. de Soulas *nice*, she would have drawn down on herself a smart reproof. Thus, to all her mother’s incitement she replied merely by such phrases as are wrongly called Jesuitical—wrongly, because the Jesuits were strong, and such reservations are the *chevaux de frise* behind which weakness takes refuge. Then the mother regarded the girl as a dissembler. If by mischance a spark of the true nature of the Wattevilles and the Rupts blazed out, the mother armed herself with the respect due from children to their parents to reduce Rosalie to passive obedience.

This covert battle was carried on in the most secret seclusion of domestic life, with closed doors. The Vicar-General, the dear Abbé Grancey, the friend of the late Archbishop, clever as he was in his capacity of the chief Father-Confessor



of the diocese, could not discover whether the struggle had stirred up some hatred between the mother and daughter, whether the mother were jealous in anticipation, or whether the court Amédée was paying to the girl through her mother had not overstepped its due limits. Being a friend of the family, neither mother nor daughter confessed to him. Rosalie, a little too much harried, morally, about young de Soulas, could not abide him, to use a homely phrase, and when he spoke to her, trying to take her heart by surprise, she received him but coldly. This aversion, discerned only by her mother's eye, was a constant subject of admonition.

"Rosalie, I cannot imagine why you affect such coldness towards Amédée. Is it because he is a friend of the family, and because we like him—your father and I?"

"Well, mamma," replied the poor child one day, "if I made him welcome, should I not be still more in the wrong?"

"What do you mean by that?" cried Mme. de Watteville. "What is the meaning of such words? Your mother is unjust, no doubt, and, according to you, would be so in any case! Never let such an answer pass your lips again to your mother——" and so forth.

This quarrel lasted three hours and three-quarters. Rosalie noted the time. Her mother, pale with fury, sent her to her room, where Rosalie pondered on the meaning of this scene without discovering it, so guileless was she. Thus young M. de Soulas, who was supposed by everyone to be very near the end he was aiming at, all neckcloths set, and by dint of pots of patent blacking—an end which required so much waxing of his mustache, so many smart waistcoats, wore out so many horseshoes and stays—for he wore a leather vest, the stays of the *lion*—Amédée, I say, was further away than any chance comer, although he had on his side the worthy and noble Abbé de Grancey.

"Madame," said M. de Soulas, addressing the Baroness, while waiting till his soup was cool enough to swallow, and affecting to give a romantic turn to his narrative, "one fine morning the mail-coach dropped at the Hôtel National a gentleman from Paris, who, after seeking apartments, made

up his mind in favor of the first floor in Mlle. Galard's house, Rue du Perron. Then the stranger went straight to the Mairie, and had himself registered as a resident with all political qualifications. Finally, he had his name entered on the list of barristers to the court, showing his title in due form, and he left his card on all his new colleagues, the ministerial officials, the councilors of the court, and the members of the bench, with the name. 'ALBERT SAVARON.'

"The name of Savaron is famous," said Mlle. de Watteville, who was strong in heraldic information. "The Savarons of Savarus are one of the oldest, noblest, and richest families in Belgium."

"He is a Frenchman, and no man's son," replied Amédée de Soulas. "If he wishes to bear the arms of the Savarons of Savarus, he must add a bar-sinister. There is no one left of the Brabant family but a Mlle. de Savarus, a rich heiress, and unmarried."

"The bar-sinister is, of course, the badge of a bastard; but the bastard of a Comte de Savarus is noble," answered Rosalie.

"Enough, that will do, mademoiselle!" said the Baroness.

"You insisted on her learning heraldry," said M. de Watteville, "and she knows it very well."

"Go on, I beg, M. de Soulas."

"You may suppose that in a town where everything is classified, known, pigeon-holed, ticketed, and numbered, as in Besançon, Albert Savaron was received without hesitation by the lawyers of the town. They were satisfied to say: 'Here is a man who does not know his Besançon. Who the devil can have sent him here? What can he hope to do? Sending his card to the judges instead of calling in person! What a blunder!' And so, three days after, Savaron had ceased to exist. He took as his servant old M. Galard's man—Galard being dead—Jérôme, who can cook a little. Albert Savaron was all the more completely forgotten, because no one had seen him or met him anywhere."

"Then, does he not go to Mass?" asked Mme. de Chavoncourt.

"He goes on Sundays to Saint-Pierre, but to the early

service at eight in the morning. He rises every night between one and two in the morning, works till eight, has his breakfast, and then goes on working. He walks in his garden, going round fifty, or perhaps sixty times; then he goes in, dines, and goes to bed between six and seven."

"How did you learn all that?" Mme. de Chavoncourt asked M. de Soulas.

"In the first place, madame, I live in the Rue Neuve, at the corner of the Rue du Perron; I look out on the house where this mysterious personage lodges; then, of course, there are communications between my tiger and Jérôme."

"And you gossip with Babylas?"

"What would you have me do out riding?"

"Well—and how was it that you engaged a stranger for your defense?" asked the Baroness, thus placing the conversation in the hands of the Vicar-General.

"The President of the Court played this pleader a trick by appointing him to defend at the Assizes a half-witted peasant accused of forgery. But M. Savaron procured the poor man's acquittal by proving his innocence and showing that he had been a tool in the hands of the real culprits. Not only did his line of defense succeed, but it led to the arrest of two of the witnesses, who were proved guilty and condemned. His speech struck the Court and the jury. One of these, a merchant, placed a difficult case next day in the hands of M. Savaron, and he won it. In the position in which we found ourselves, M. Berryer finding it impossible to come to Besançon, M. de Garcenault advised him to employ this M. Albert Savaron, foretelling our success. As soon as I saw him and heard him, I felt faith in him, and I was not wrong."

"Is he then so extraordinary?" asked Mme. de Chavoncourt.

"Certainly, madame," replied the Vicar-General.

"Well, tell us about it," said Mme. de Watteville.

"The first time I saw him," said the Abbé de Grancey, "he received me in his outer room next the anteroom—old Galard's drawing-room—which he has had painted like old oak, and which I found to be entirely lined with law-books,

arranged on shelves also painted as old oak. The painting and the books are the sole decoration of the room, for the furniture consists of an old writing-table of carved wood, six old armchairs covered with tapestry, window curtains of gray stuff bordered with green, and a green carpet over the floor. The anteroom stove heats this library as well. As I waited there I did not picture my advocate as a young man. But this singular setting is in perfect harmony with his person; for M. Savaron came out in a black merino dressing-gown, tied with a red cord, red slippers, a red flannel waistcoat, and a red smoking-cap."

"The Devil's colors!" exclaimed Mme. de Watteville.

"Yes," said the Abbé; "but a magnificent head. Black hair already streaked with a little gray, hair like that of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in pictures, with thick shining curls, hair as stiff as horse-hair; a round white throat like a woman's; a splendid forehead, furrowed by the strong median line which great schemes, great thoughts, deep meditations stamp on a great man's brow; an olive complexion marbled with red, a square nose, eyes of flame, hollow cheeks, with two long lines betraying much suffering, a mouth with a sardonic smile, and a small chin, narrow, and too short; crows' feet on his temples; deep-set eyes, moving in their sockets like burning balls; but, in spite of all these indications of a violently passionate nature, his manner was calm, deeply resigned, and his voice of penetrating sweetness, which surprised me in court by its easy flow; a true orator's voice, now clear and appealing, sometimes insinuating, but a voice of thunder when needful, and lending itself to sarcasm to become incisive.

"M. Albert Savaron is of middle height, neither stout nor thin. And his hands are those of a prelate.

"The second time I called on him he received me in his bedroom, adjoining the library, and smiled at my astonishment when I saw there a wretched chest of drawers, a shabby carpet, a camp-bed, and cotton window curtains. He came out of his private room, to which no one is admitted, as Jérôme informed me; the man did not go in, but merely knocked at the door.

"The third time he was breakfasting in his library on the most frugal fare; but on this occasion, as he had spent the night studying our documents, as I had my attorney with me, and as that worthy M. Girardet is long-winded, I had leisure to study the stranger. He certainly is no ordinary man. There is more than one secret behind that face, at once so terrible and so gentle, patient and yet impatient, broad and yet hollow. I saw, too, that he stooped a little, like all men who have some heavy burden to bear."

"Why did so eloquent a man leave Paris? For what purpose did he come to Besançon?" asked pretty Mme. de Chavoncourt. "Could no one tell him how little chance a stranger has of succeeding here? The good folks of Besançon will make use of him, but they will not allow him to make use of them. Why, having come, did he make so little effort that it needed a freak of the President's to bring him forward?"

"After carefully studying that fine head," said the Abbé, looking keenly at the lady who had interrupted him, in such a way as to suggest that there was something he would not tell, "and especially after hearing him this morning reply to one of the bigwigs of the Paris Bar, I believe that this man, who may be five and thirty, will by and by make a great sensation."

"Why should we discuss him? You have gained your action, and paid him," said Mme. de Watteville, watching her daughter, who, all the time the Vicar-General had been speaking, seemed to hang on his lips.

The conversation changed, and no more was heard of Albert Savaron.

The portrait sketched by the cleverest of the Vicars-General of the diocese had all the greater charm for Rosalie because there was a romance behind it. For the first time in her life she had come across the marvelous, the exceptional, which smiles on every youthful imagination, and which curiosity, so eager at Rosalie's age, goes forth to meet halfway. What an ideal being was this Albert—gloomy, unhappy, eloquent, laborious, as compared by Mlle. de Watteville to that chubby fat Count, bursting with health, paying compliments,

and talking of the fashions in the very face of the splendor of the old counts of Rupt. Amédée had cost her many quarrels and scoldings, and, indeed, she knew him only too well; while this Albert Savaron offered many enigmas to be solved.

"Albert Savaron de Savarus," she repeated to herself.

Now, to see him, to catch sight of him! This was the desire of the girl to whom desire was hitherto unknown. She pondered in her heart, in her fancy, in her brain, the least phrases used by the Abbé de Grancey, for all his words had told.

"A fine forehead!" said she to herself, looking at the head of every man seated at the table; "I do not see one fine one.—M. de Soulas's is too prominent. M. de Grancey's is fine, but is seventy, and has no hair, it is impossible to see where his forehead ends."

"What is the matter, Rosalie; you are eating nothing?"

"I am not hungry, mamma," said she. "A prelate's hands——" she went on to herself. "I cannot remember our handsome Archbishop's hands, though he confirmed me."

Finally, in the midst of her coming and going in the labyrinth of her meditations, she remembered a lighted window she had seen from her bed, gleaming through the trees of the two adjoining gardens, when she had happened to wake in the night. . . . "Then that was his light!" thought she. "I might see him!—I will see him."

"M. de Grancey, is the Chapter's lawsuit quite settled?" said Rosalie point-blank to the Vicar-General, during a moment of silence.

Mme. de Watteville exchanged rapid glances with the Vicar-General.

"What can that matter to you, my dear child?" she said to Rosalie, with an affected sweetness which made her daughter cautious for the rest of her days.

"It might be carried to the Court of Appeal, but our adversaries will think twice about that," replied the Abbé.

"I never could have believed that Rosalie would think about a lawsuit all through a dinner," remarked Mme. de Watteville.

"Nor I either," said Rosalie, in a dreamy way that made everyone laugh. "But M. de Grancey was so full of it that I was interested."

The company rose from table and returned to the drawing-room. All through the evening Rosalie listened in case Albert Savaron should be mentioned again; but beyond the congratulations offered by each newcomer to the Abbé on having gained his suit, to which no one added any praise of the advocate, no more was said about it. Mlle. de Watteville impatiently looked forward to bedtime. She had promised herself to wake at between two and three in the morning, and to look at Albert's dressing-room windows. When the hour came, she felt almost pleasure in gazing at the glimmer from the lawyer's candles that shone through the trees, now almost bare of their leaves. By the help of the strong sight of a young girl, which curiosity seems to make longer, she saw Albert writing, and fancied she could distinguish the color of the furniture, which she thought was red. From the chimney above the roof rose a thick column of smoke.

"While all the world is sleeping, he is awake—like God!" thought she.

The education of girls brings with it such serious problems—for the future of a nation is in the mother—that the University of France long since set itself the task of having nothing to do with it. Here is one of these problems: Ought girls to be informed on all points? Ought their minds to be under restraint? It need not be said that the religious system is one of restraint. If you enlighten them, you make them demons before their time; if you keep them from thinking, you end in the sudden explosion so well shown by Molière in the character of Agnès, and you leave this suppressed mind, so fresh and clear-seeing, as swift and as logical as that of a savage, at the mercy of an accident. This inevitable crisis was brought on in Mlle. de Watteville by the portrait which one of the most prudent Abbés of the Chapter of Besançon imprudently allowed himself to sketch at a dinner party.

Next morning, Mlle. de Watteville, while dressing, neces-

sarily looked out at Albert Savaron walking in the garden adjoining that of the Hôtel de Rupt.

"What would have become of me," thought she, "if he had lived anywhere else? Here I can, at any rate, see him.—What is he thinking about?"

Having seen this extraordinary man, though at a distance, the only man whose countenance stood forth in contrast with crowds of Besançon faces she had hitherto met with, Rosalie at once jumped at the idea of getting into his home, of ascertaining the reasons of so much mystery, of hearing that eloquent voice, of winning a glance from those fine eyes. All this she set her heart on, but how could she achieve it?

All that day she drew her needle through her embroidery with the obtuse concentration of a girl who, like Agnès, seems to be thinking of nothing, but who is reflecting on things in general so deeply that her artifice is unfailing. As a result of this profound meditation, Rosalie thought she would go to confession. Next morning, after Mass, she had a brief interview with the Abbé Giroud at Saint-Pierre, and managed so ingeniously that the hour for her confession was fixed for Sunday morning at half-past seven, before the eight o'clock Mass. She committed herself to a dozen fibs in order to find herself, just for once, in the church at the hour when the lawyer came to Mass. Then she was seized with an impulse of extreme affection for her father; she went to see him in his workroom, and asked him for all sorts of information on the art of turning, ending by advising him to turn larger pieces, columns. After persuading her father to set to work on some twisted pillars, one of the difficulties of the turner's art, she suggested that he should make use of a large heap of stones that lay in the middle of the garden to construct a sort of grotto on which he might erect a little temple or belvedere in which his twisted pillars could be used and shown off to all the world.

At the climax of the pleasure the poor unoccupied man derived from this scheme, Rosalie said, as she kissed him, "Above all, do not tell mamma who gave you the notion; she would scold me."

"Do not be afraid!" replied M. de Watteville, who



groaned as bitterly as his daughter under the tyranny of the terrible descendant of the Rupts.

So Rosalie had a certain prospect of seeing ere long a charming observatory built, whence her eye would command the lawyer's private room. And there are men for whose sake young girls can carry out such master-strokes of diplomacy, while, for the most part, like Albert Savaron, they know it not.

The Sunday so impatiently looked for arrived, and Rosalie dressed with such carefulness as made Mariette, the lady's-maid, smile.

"It is the first time I ever knew mademoiselle to be so fidgety," said Mariette.

"It strikes me," said Rosalie, with a glance at Mariette, which brought poppies to her cheeks, "that you too are more particular on some days than on others."

As she went down the steps, across the courtyard, and through the gates, Rosalie's heart beat, as everybody's does in anticipation of a great event. Hitherto, she had never known what it was to walk in the streets; for a moment she had felt as though her mother must read her schemes on her brow, and forbid her going to confession, and she now felt new blood in her feet, she lifted them as though she trod on fire. She had, of course, arranged to be with her confessor at a quarter-past eight, telling her mother eight, so as to have about a quarter of an hour near Albert. She got to church before Mass, and after a short prayer, went to see if the Abbé Giroud were in his confessional, simply to pass the time; and she thus placed herself in such a way as to see Albert as he came into church.

The man must have been atrociously ugly who did not seem handsome to Mlle. de Watteville in the frame of mind produced by her curiosity. And Albert Savaron, who was really very striking, made all the more impression on Rosalie because his mien, his walk, his carriage, everything down to his clothing, had the indescribable stamp which can only be expressed by the word *Mystery*.

He came in. The church, till now gloomy, seemed to Rosalie to be illuminated. The girl was fascinated by his

slow and solemn demeanor, as of a man who bears a world on his shoulders, and whose deep gaze, whose very gestures, combine to express a devastating or absorbing thought. Rosalie now understood the Vicar-General's words in their fullest extent. Yes, those eyes of tawny brown, shot with golden lights, covered an ardor which revealed itself in sudden flashes. Rosalie, with a recklessness which Mariette noted, stood in the lawyer's way, so as to exchange glances with him; and this glance turned her blood, for it seethed and boiled as though its warmth were doubled.

As soon as Albert had taken a seat, Mlle. de Watteville quickly found a place whence she could see him perfectly during all the time the Abbé might leave her. When Mariette said, "Here is M. Giroud," it seemed to Rosalie that the interval had lasted no more than a few minutes. By the time she came out from the confessional, Mass was over. Albert had left the church.

"The Vicar-General was right," thought she. "*He* is unhappy. Why should this eagle—for he has the eyes of an eagle—swoop down on Besançon? Oh, I must know everything! But how?"

Under the smart of this new desire Rosalie set the stitches of her worsted-work with exquisite precision, and hid her meditations under a little innocent air, which shammed simplicity to deceive Mme. de Watteville.

From that Sunday, when Mlle. de Watteville had met that look, or, if you please, received this baptism of fire—a fine expression of Napoleon's which may be well applied to love—she eagerly promoted the plan for the belvedere.

"Mamma," said she one day when two columns were turned, "my father has taken a singular idea into his head; he is turning columns for a belvedere he intends to erect on the heap of stones in the middle of the garden. Do you approve of it? It seems to me——"

"I approve of everything your father does," said Mme. de Watteville dryly, "and it is a wife's duty to submit to her husband even if she does not approve of his ideas. Why should I object to a thing which is of no importance in itself, if only it amuses M. de Watteville?"

"Well, because from thence we shall see into M. de Soulas's rooms, and M. de Soulas will see us when we are there. Perhaps remarks may be made——"

"Do you presume, Rosalie, to guide your parents, and think you know more than they do of life and the proprieties?"

"I say no more, mamma. Besides, my father said that there would be a room in the grotto, where it would be cool, and where we can take coffee."

"Your father has had an excellent idea," said Mme. de Watteville, who forthwith went to look at the columns.

She gave her entire approbation to the Baron de Watteville's design, while choosing for the erection of this monument a spot at the bottom of the garden, which could not be seen from M. de Soulas's windows, but whence they could perfectly see into Albert Savaron's rooms. A builder was sent for, who undertook to construct a grotto, of which the top should be reached by a path three feet wide through the rock-work, where periwinkles would grow, iris, clematis, ivy, honeysuckle, and Virginia creeper. The Baroness desired that the inside should be lined with rustic woodwork, such as was then the fashion for flower-stands, with a looking-glass against the wall, an ottoman forming a box, and a table of inlaid bark. M. de Soulas proposed that the floor should be of asphalt. Rosalie suggested a hanging chandelier of rustic wood.

"The Wattevilles are having something charming done in their garden," was rumored in Besançon.

"They are rich, and can afford a thousand crowns for a whim——"

"A thousand crowns!" exclaimed Mme. de Chavoncourt.

"Yes, a thousand crowns," cried young M. de Soulas. "A man has been sent for from Paris to rusticate the interior, but it will be very pretty. M. de Watteville himself is making the chandelier, and has begun to carve the wood."

"Berquet is to make a cellar under it," said an Abbé.

"No," replied young M. de Soulas, "he is raising the kiosk on a concrete foundation, that it may not be damp."

"You know the very least things that are done in that

house," said Mme. de Charoncourt sourly, as she looked at one of her great girls waiting to be married for a year past.

Mlle. de Watteville, with a little flush of pride in thinking of the success of her belvedere, discerned in herself a vast superiority over everyone about her. No one guessed that a little girl, supposed to be a witless goose, had simply made up her mind to get a closer view of the lawyer Savaron's private study.

Albert Savaron's brilliant defense of the Cathedral Chapter was all the sooner forgotten because the envy of other lawyers was aroused. Also, Savaron, faithful to his seclusion, went nowhere. Having no friends to cry him up, and seeing no one, he increased the chances of being forgotten which are common to strangers in such a town as Besançon. Nevertheless, he pleaded three times at the Commercial Tribunal in three knotty cases which had to be carried to the superior court. He thus gained as clients four of the chief merchants of the place, who discerned in him so much good sense and sound legal purview that they placed their claims in his hands.

On the day when the Watteville family inaugurated the belvedere, Savaron also was founding a monument. Thanks to the connections he had obscurely formed among the upper class of merchants in Besançon, he was starting a fortnightly paper, called the *Eastern Review*, with the help of forty shares of five hundred francs each, taken up by his ten first clients, on whom he had impressed the necessity for promoting the interests of Besançon, the town where the traffic should meet between Mulhouse and Lyons, and the chief center between Mulhouse and the Rhone.

To compete with Strasbourg, was it not needful that Besançon should become a focus of enlightenment as well as of trade? The leading questions relating to the interests of Eastern France could only be dealt with in a review. What a glorious task to rob Strasbourg and Dijon of their literary importance, to bring light to the East of France, and compete with the centralizing influence of Paris! These reflections, put forward by Albert, were repeated by the ten merchants, who believed them to be their own.

M. Savaron did not commit the blunder of putting his name in front; he left the finances of the concern to his chief client, M. Boucher, connected by marriage with one of the great publishers of important ecclesiastical works; but he kept the editorship, with a share of the profits as founder. The commercial interest appealed to Dôle, to Dijon, to Salins, to Neufchâtel, to the Jura, Bourg, Nantua, Lous-le-Saulnier. The concurrence was invited of the learning and energy of every scientific student in the districts of Le Bugey, La Bresse, and Franche Comté. By the influence of commercial interests and common feeling, five hundred subscribers were booked in consideration of the low price: the *Review* cost eight francs a quarter.

To avoid hurting the conceit of the provincials by refusing their articles, the lawyer hit on the good idea of suggesting a desire for the literary management of this *Review* to M. Boucher's eldest son, a young man of two and twenty, very eager for fame, to whom the snares and woes of literary responsibilities were utterly unknown. Albert quietly kept the upper hand, and made Alfred Boucher his devoted adherent. Alfred was the only man in Besançon with whom the king of the Bar was on familiar terms. Alfred came in the morning to discuss the articles for the next number with Albert in the garden. It is needless to say that the trial number contained a "Meditation" by Alfred, which Savaron approved. In his conversations with Alfred, Albert would let drop some great ideas, subjects for articles of which Alfred availed himself. And thus the merchant's son fancied he was making capital out of the great man. To Alfred, Albert was a man of genius, of profound politics. The commercial world, enchanted at the success of the *Review*, had to pay up only three-tenths of their shares. Two hundred more subscribers, and the periodical would pay a dividend to the shareholders of five per cent., the editor remaining unpaid. This editing, indeed, was beyond price.

After the third number the *Review* was recognized for exchange by all the papers published in France, which Albert henceforth read at home. This third number included a tale signed "A. S.," and attributed to the famous lawyer.

In spite of the small attention paid by the higher circle of Besançon to the *Review*, which was accused of Liberal views, this, the first novel produced in the county, came under discussion that mid-winter at Mme. de Chavoncourt's.

"Papa," said Rosalie, "a *Review* is published in Besançon; you ought to take it in; and keep it in your room, for mamma would not let me read it, but you will lend it to me."

M. de Watteville, eager to obey his dear Rosalie, who for the last five months had given him so many proofs of filial affection,—M. de Watteville went in person to subscribe for a year to the *Eastern Review*, and lent the four numbers already out to his daughter. In the course of the night Rosalie devoured the tale—the first she had ever read in her life—but she had only known life for two months past. Hence the effect produced on her by this work must not be judged by ordinary rules. Without prejudice of any kind as to the greater or less merit of this composition from the pen of a Parisian who had thus imported into the province the manner, the brilliancy, if you will, of the new literary school, it could not fail to be a masterpiece to a young girl abandoning all her intelligence and her innocent heart to her first reading of this kind.

Also, from what she had heard said, Rosalie had by intuition conceived a notion of it which strangely enhanced the interest of this novel. She hoped to find in it the sentiments, and perhaps something of the life of Albert. From the first pages this opinion took so strong a hold on her that after reading the fragment to the end she was certain that it was no mistake. Here, then, is this confession, in which, according to the critics of Mme. de Chavoncourt's drawing-room, Albert had imitated some modern writers who, for lack of inventiveness, relate their private joys, their private griefs, or the mysterious events of their own life.

### AMBITION FOR LOVE'S SAKE

In 1823 two young men, having agreed as a plan for a holiday to make a tour through Switzerland, set out from

Lucerne one fine morning in the month of July in a boat pulled by three oarsmen. They started for Fluelen, intending to stop at every notable spot on the lake of the Four Cantons. The views which shut in the waters on the way from Lucerne to Fluelen offer every combination that the most exacting fancy can demand of mountains and rivers, lakes and rocks, brooks and pastures, trees and torrents. Here are austere solitudes and charming headlands, smiling and trimly kept meadows, forests crowning perpendicular granite cliffs like plumes, deserted but verdant reaches opening out, and valleys whose beauty seems the lovelier in the dreamy distance.

As they passed the pretty hamlet of Gersau, one of the friends looked for a long time at a wooden house which seemed to have been recently built, inclosed by a paling, and standing on a promontory, almost bathed by the waters. As the boat rowed past, a woman's head was raised against the background of the room on the upper story of this house, to admire the effect of the boat on the lake. One of the young men met the glance thus indifferently given by the unknown fair.

"Let us stop here," said he to his friend. "We meant to make Lucerne our headquarters for seeing Switzerland; you will not take it amiss, Léopold, if I change my mind and stay here to take charge of our possessions. Then you can go where you please; my journey is ended. Pull to land, men, and put us out at this village; we will breakfast here. I will go back to Lucerne to fetch all our luggage, and before you leave you will know in which house I take a lodging, where you will find me on your return."

"Here or at Lucerne," replied Léopold, "the difference is not so great that I need hinder you from following your whim."

These two youths were friends in the truest sense of the word. They were of the same age; they had learned at the same school; and after studying the law they were spending their holiday in the classical tour in Switzerland. Léopold, by his father's determination, was already pledged to a place in a notary's office in Paris. His spirit of rectitude, his gen-

tleness, and the coolness of his senses and his brain, guaranteed him to be a docile pupil. Léopold could see himself a notary in Paris: his life lay before him like one of the high roads that cross the plains of France, and he looked along its whole length with philosophical resignation.

The character of his companion, whom we will call Rodolphe, presented a strong contrast with Léopold's, and their antagonism had no doubt had the result of tightening the bond that united them. Rodolphe was the natural son of a man of rank, who was carried off by a premature death before he could make any arrangements for securing the means of existence to a woman he fondly loved and to Rodolphe. Thus cheated by a stroke of fate, Rodolphe's mother had recourse to a heroic measure. She sold everything she owed to the munificence of her child's father for a sum of more than a hundred thousand francs, bought with it a life annuity for herself at a high rate, and thus acquired an income of about fifteen thousand francs, resolving to devote the whole of it to the education of her son, so as to give him all the personal advantages that might help to make his fortune, while saving, by strict economy, a small capital to be his when he came of age. It was bold; it was counting on her own life; but without this boldness the good mother would certainly have found it impossible to live and to bring her child up suitably, and he was her only hope, her future, the spring of all her joys.

Rodolphe, the son of a most charming Parisian woman, and a man of mark, a nobleman of Brabant, was cursed with extreme sensitiveness. From his infancy he had in everything shown a most ardent nature. In him mere desire became a guiding force and the motive power of his whole being, the stimulus to his imagination, the reason of his actions. Notwithstanding the pains taken by a clever mother, who was alarmed when she detected this predisposition, Rodolphe wished for things as a poet imagines, as a mathematician calculates, as a painter sketches, as a musician creates melodies. Tender-hearted, like his mother, he dashed with inconceivable violence and impetus of thought after the object of his desires; he annihilated time. While dreaming of



the fulfillment of his schemes, he always overlooked the means of attainment. "When my son has children," said his mother, "he will want them born grown up."

This fine frenzy, carefully directed, enabled Rodolphe to achieve his studies with brilliant results, and to become what the English call an accomplished gentleman. His mother was then proud of him, though still fearing a catastrophe if ever a passion should possess a heart at once so tender and so susceptible, so vehement and so kind. Therefore, the judicious mother had encouraged the friendship which bound Léopold to Rodolphe and Rodolphe to Léopold, since she saw in the cold and faithful young notary a guardian, a comrade, who might to a certain extent take her place if by some misfortune she should be lost to her son. Rodolphe's mother, still handsome at three and forty, had inspired Léopold with an ardent passion. This circumstance made the two young men even more intimate.

So Léopold, knowing Rodolphe well, was not surprised to find him stopping at a village and giving up the projected journey to Saint-Gothard, on the strength of a single glance at the upper window of a house. While breakfast was prepared for them at the Swan Inn, the friends walked round the hamlet and came to the neighborhood of the pretty new house; here, while gazing about him and talking to the inhabitants, Rodolphe discovered the residence of some decent folk, who were willing to take him as a boarder, a very frequent custom in Switzerland. They offered him a bedroom looking over the lake and the mountains, and from whence he had a view of one of those immense sweeping reaches which, in this lake, are the admiration of every traveler. This house was divided by a roadway and a little creek from the new house, where Rodolphe had caught sight of the unknown fair one's face.

For a hundred francs a month Rodolphe was relieved of all thought for the necessities of life. But, in consideration of the outlay the Stopfer couple expected to make, they bargained for three months' residence and a month's payment in advance. Rub a Swiss never so little, and you find the usurer. After breakfast, Rodolphe at once made himself at

home by depositing in his room such property as he had brought with him for the journey to the Saint-Gothard, and he watched Léopold as he set out, moved by the spirit of routine, to carry out the excursion for himself and his friend. When Rodolphe, sitting on a fallen rock on the shore, could no longer see Léopold's boat, he turned to examine the new house with stolen glances, hoping to see the fair unknown. Alas! he went in without its having given a sign of life. During dinner, in the company of M. and Mme. Stopfer, retired coopers from Neufchâtel, he questioned them as to the neighborhood, and ended by learning all he wanted to know about the lady, thanks to his hosts' loquacity; for they were ready to pour out their budget of gossip without any pressing.

The fair stranger's name was Fanny Lovelace. This name (pronounced *Lovcless*) is that of an old English family, but Richardson has given it to a creation whose fame eclipses all others! Miss Lovelace had come to settle by the lake for her father's health, the physicians having recommended him the air of Lucerne. These two English people had arrived with no other servant than a little girl of fourteen, a dumb child, much attached to Miss Fanny, on whom she waited very intelligently, and had settled, two winters since, with M. and Mme. Bergmann, the retired head-gardeners of His Excellency Count Borromeo of Isola Bella and Isola Madre in the Lago Maggiore. These Swiss, who were possessed of an income of about a thousand crowns a year, had let the top story of their house to the Lovelaces for three years, at a rent of two hundred francs a year. Old Lovelace, a man of ninety, and much broken, was too poor to allow himself any gratifications, and very rarely went out; his daughter worked to maintain him, translating English books, and writing some herself, it was said. The Lovelaces could not afford to hire boats to row on the lake, or horses and guides to explore the neighborhood.

Poverty demanding such privation as this excites all the greater compassion among the Swiss, because it deprives them of a chance of profit. The cook of the establishment fed the three English boarders for a hundred francs a month

inclusive. In Gersau it was generally believed, however, that the gardener and his wife, in spite of their pretensions, used the cook's name as a screen to net the little profits of this bargain. The Bergmanns had made beautiful gardens round their house, and had built a hothouse. The flowers, the fruit, and the botanical rarities of this spot were what had induced the young lady to settle on it as she passed through Gersau. Miss Fanny was said to be nineteen years old; she was the old man's youngest child, and the object of his adulation. About two months ago she had hired a piano from Lucerne, for she seemed to be crazy about music.

"She loves flowers and music, and she is unmarried!" thought Rodolphe; "what good luck!"

The next day Rodolphe went to ask leave to visit the hothouses and gardens, which were beginning to be somewhat famous. The permission was not immediately granted. The retired gardeners asked, strangely enough, to see Rodolphe's passport; it was sent to them at once. The paper was not returned to him till next morning, by the hands of the cook, who expressed her master's pleasure in showing him their place. Rodolphe went to the Bergmanns, not without a certain trepidation, known only to persons of strong feelings, who go through as much passion in a moment as some men experience in a whole lifetime.

After dressing himself carefully to gratify the old gardeners of the Borromean Islands, whom he regarded as the warders of his treasure, he went all over the grounds, looking at the house now and again, but with much caution; the old couple treated him with evident distrust. But his attention was soon attracted by the little English deaf-mute, in whom his discernment, though young as yet, enabled him to recognize a girl of African, or at least of Sicilian, origin. The child had the golden-brown color of a Havana cigar, eyes of fire, Armenian eyelids with lashes of very un-British length, hair blacker than black; and under this almost olive-skin, sinews of extraordinary strength and feverish alertness. She looked at Rodolphe with amazing curiosity and effrontery, watching his every movement.

"To whom does that little Moresco belong?" he asked worthy Mme. Bergmann.

"To the English," M. Bergmann replied.

"But she never was born in England!"

"They may have brought her from the Indies," said Mme. Bergmann.

"I have been told that Miss Loveiace is fond of music. I should be delighted if, during the residence by the lake to which I am condemned by my doctor's orders, she would allow me to join her."

"They receive no one, and will not see anybody," said the old gardener.

Rodolphe bit his lips and went away, without having been invited into the house, or taken into the part of the garden that lay between the front of the house and the shore of the little promontory. On that side the house had a balcony above the first floor, made of wood, and covered by the roof, which projected deeply like the roof of a chalet on all four sides of the building, in the Swiss fashion. Rodolphe had loudly praised the elegance of this arrangement, and talked of the view from that balcony, but all in vain. When he had taken leave of the Bergmanns it struck him that he was a simpleton, like any man of spirit and imagination disappointed of the results of a plan which he had believed would succeed.

In the evening he, of course, went out in a boat on the lake, round and about the spit of land, to Brunnen and to Schwytz, and came in at nightfall. From afar he saw the window open and brightly lighted; he heard the sound of a piano and the tones of an exquisite voice. He made the boatman stop, and gave himself up to the pleasure of listening to an Italian air delightfully sung. When the singing ceased, Rodolphe landed and sent away the boat and rowers. At the cost of wetting his feet, he went to sit down under the water-worn granite shelf crowned by a thick hedge of thorny acacia, by the side of which ran a long lime avenue in the Bergmanns' garden. By the end of an hour he heard steps and voices just above him, but the words that reached his ears were all Italian, and spoken by two women.

He took advantage of the moment when the two speakers were at one end of the walk to slip noiselessly to the other. After half an hour of struggling he got to the end of the avenue, and there took up a position whence, without being seen or heard, he could watch the two women without being observed by them as they came towards him. What was Rodolphe's amazement on recognizing the deaf-mute as one of them; she was talking to Miss Lovelace in Italian.

It was now eleven o'clock at night. The stillness was so perfect on the lake and around the dwelling that the two women must have thought themselves safe; in all Gersau there could be no eyes open but theirs. Rodolphe supposed that the girl's dumbness must be a necessary deception. From the way in which they both spoke Italian, Rodolphe suspected that it was the mother tongue of both girls, and concluded that the name of English also hid some disguise.

"They are Italian refugees," said he to himself, "outlaws in fear of the Austrian or Sardinian police. The young lady waits till it is dark to walk and talk in security."

He lay down by the side of the hedge, and crawled like a snake to find a way between two acacia shrubs. At the risk of leaving his coat behind him, or tearing deep scratches in his back, he got through the hedge when the so-called Miss Fanny and her pretended deaf-and-dumb maid were at the other end of the path; then, when they had come within twenty yards of him without seeing him, for he was in the shadow of the hedge, and the moon was shining brightly, he suddenly rose.

"Fear nothing," said he in French to the Italian girl, "I am not a spy. You are refugees, I have guessed that. I am a Frenchman whom one look from you has fixed at Gersau."

Rodolphe, startled by the acute pain caused by some steel instrument piercing his side, fell like a log.

"*Nel lago con pietra!*" said the terrible dumb girl.

"Oh, Gina!" exclaimed the Italian.

"She has missed me," said Rodolphe, pulling from the wound a stiletto, which had been turned by one of the false ribs. "But a little higher up it would have been deep in

my heart.—I was wrong, Francesca,” he went on, remembering the name he had heard little Gina repeat several times; “I owe her no grudge, do not scold her. The happiness of speaking to you is well worth the prick or a stiletto. Only show me the way out; I must get back to the Stopfers’ house. Be easy; I shall tell nothing.”

Francesca, recovering from her astonishment, helped Rodolphe to rise, and said a few words to Gina, whose eyes filled with tears. The two girls made him sit down on a bench and take off his coat, his waistcoat, and his cravat. Then Gina opened his shirt and sucked the wound strongly. Francesca, who had left them, returned with a large piece of sticking-plaster, which she applied to the wound.

“You can walk now as far as your house,” she said.

Each took an arm, and Rodolphe was conducted to a side gate, of which the key was in Francesca’s apron pocket.

“Does Gina speak French?” said Rodolphe to Francesca.

“No. But do not excite yourself,” replied Francesca with some impatience.

“Let me look at you,” said Rodolphe pathetically, “for it may be long before I am able to come again——”

He leaned against one of the gate-posts contemplating the beautiful Italian, who allowed him to gaze at her for a moment under the sweetest silence and the sweetest night which ever, perhaps, shone on this lake, the king of Swiss lakes.

Francesca was quite of the classic Italian type, and such as imagination supposes or pictures, or, if you will, dreams, that Italian women are. What first struck Rodolphe was the grace and elegance of a figure evidently powerful, though so slender as to appear fragile. An amber paleness overspread her face, betraying sudden interest, but it did not dim the voluptuous glance of her liquid eyes of velvety blackness. A pair of hands as beautiful as ever a Greek sculptor added to the polished arms of a statue grasped Rodolphe’s arm, and their whiteness gleamed against his black coat. The rash Frenchman could but just discern the long, oval shape of her face, and a melancholy mouth showing brilliant teeth between the parted lips, full, fresh, and brightly red. The exquisite lines of this face guaranteed to Francesca

permanent beauty; but what most struck Rodolphe was the adorable freedom, the Italian frankness of this woman, wholly absorbed as she was in her pity for him.

Francesca said a word to Gina, who gave Rodolphe her arm as far as the Stopfers' door, and fled like a swallow as soon as she had rung.

"These patriots do not play at killing!" said Rodolphe to himself as he felt his sufferings when he found himself in his bed. "*Nel lago!*" Gina would have pitched me into the lake with a stone tied to my neck."

Next day he sent to Lucerne for the best surgeon there, and when he came, enjoined on him absolute secrecy, giving him to understand that his honor depended on it.

Léopold returned from his excursion on the day when his friend first got out of bed. Rodolphe made up a story, and begged him to go to Lucerne to fetch their luggage and letters. Léopold brought back the most fatal, the most dreadful news: Rodolphe's mother was dead. While the two friends were on their way from Bâle to Lucerne, the fatal letter, written by Léopold's father, had reached Lucerne the day they left for Fluelen.

In spite of Léopold's utmost precautions, Rodolphe fell ill of a nervous fever. As soon as Léopold saw his friend out of danger, he set out for France with a power of attorney, and Rodolphe could thus remain at Gersau, the only place in the world where his grief could grow calmer. The young Frenchman's position, his despair, the circumstances which made such a loss worse for him than for any other man, were known, and secured him the pity and interest of everyone at Gersau. Every morning the pretended dumb girl came to see him and bring him news of her mistress.

As soon as Rodolphe could go out he went to the Bergmanns' house, to thank Miss Fanny Lovelace and her father for the interest they had taken in his sorrow and his illness. For the first time since he had lodged with the Bergmanns the old Italian admitted a stranger to his room, where Rodolphe was received with the cordiality due to his misfortunes and to his being a Frenchman, which excluded all distrust of him. Francesca looked so lovely by candle-light that first

evening that she shed a ray of brightness on his grieving heart. Her smiles flung the roses of hope on his woe. She sang, not indeed gay songs, but grave and solemn melodies suited to the state of Rodolphe's heart, and he observed this touching care.

At about eight o'clock the old man left the young people without any sign of uneasiness, and went to his room. When Francesca was tired of singing, she led Rodolphe on to the balcony, whence they perceived the sublime scenery of the lake, and signed to him to be seated by her on a rustic wooden bench.

"Am I very indiscreet in asking how old you are, cara Francesca?" said Rodolphe

"Nineteen," said she, "well past."

"If anything in the world could soothe my sorrow," he went on, "it would be the hope of winning you from your father, whatever your fortune may be. So beautiful as you are, you seem to me richer than a prince's daughter. And I tremble as I confess to you the feelings with which you have inspired me; but they are deep—they are eternal."

"*Zitto!*" said Francesco, laying a finger of her right hand on her lips. "Say no more: I am not free. I have been married these three years."

For a few minutes utter silence reigned. When the Italian girl, alarmed at Rodolphe's stillness, went close to him, she found that he had fainted.

"*Povero!*" she said to herself. "And I thought him cold."

She fetched some salts, and revived Rodolphe by making him smell at them.

"Married!" said Rodolphe, looking at Francesca. And then his tears flowed freely.

"Child!" said she. "But there still is hope. My husband is——"

"Eighty?" Rodolphe put in.

"No," said she with a smile, "but sixty-five. He has disguised himself as much older to mislead the police."

"Dearest," said Rodolphe, "a few more shocks of this kind and I shall die. Only when you have known me twenty



years will you understand the strength and power of my heart, and the nature of its aspirations for happiness. This plant," he went on, pointing to the yellow jasmine which covered the balustrade, "does not climb more eagerly to spread itself in the sunbeams than I have clung to you for this month past. I love you with unique passion. That love will be the secret fount of my life—I may possibly die of it."

"Oh! Frenchman, Frenchman!" said she, emphasizing her exclamation with a little incredulous grimace.

"Shall I not be forced to wait, to accept you at the hands of time?" said he gravely. "But know this; if you are in earnest in what you have allowed to escape you, I will wait for you faithfully, without suffering any other attachment to grow up in my heart."

She looked at him doubtfully.

"None," said he, "not even a passing fancy. I have my fortune to make; you must have a splendid one, nature created you a princess——"

At this word Francesca could not repress a faint smile, which gave her face the most bewitching expression, something subtle, like what the great Leonardo has so well depicted in the *Gioconda*. This smile made Rodolphe pause. "Ah yes!" he went on, "you must suffer much from the destitution to which exile has brought you. Oh, if you would make me happy above all men, and consecrate my love, you would treat me as a friend. Ought I not to be your friend?—My poor mother has left sixty thousand francs of savings; take half."

Francesca looked steadily at him. This piercing gaze went to the bottom of Rodolphe's soul.

"We want nothing; my work amply supplies our luxuries," she replied in a grave voice.

"And can I endure that a Francesca should work?" cried he. "One day you will return to your country and find all you left there." Again the Italian girl looked at Rodolphe. "And you will then repay me what you may have condescended to borrow," he added, with an expression full of delicate feeling.

"Let us drop this subject," said she, with incomparable dignity of gesture, expression, and attitude. "Make a splendid fortune. be one of the remarkable men of your country; that is my desire. Fame is a drawbridge which may serve to cross a deep gulf. Be ambitious if you must. I believe you have great and powerful talents, but use them rather for the happiness of mankind than to deserve me; you will be all the greater in my eyes."

In the course of this conversation, which lasted two hours, Rodolphe discovered that Francesca was an enthusiast for Liberal ideas, and for that worship of liberty which had led to the three revolutions in Naples, Piémont, and Spain. On leaving, he was shown to the door by Gina, the so-called mute. At eleven o'clock no one was astir in the village, there was no fear of listeners; Rodolphe took Gina into a corner, and asked her in a low voice and bad Italian: "Who are your master and mistress, child? Tell me, I will give you this fine new gold piece."

"Monsieur," said the girl, taking the coin, "my master is the famous bookseller Lamporani of Milan, one of the leaders of the revolution, and the conspirator of all others whom Austria would most like to have in the Spielberg."

"A bookseller's wife! Ah, so much the better," thought he; "we are on an equal footing.—And what is her family?" he added, "for she looks like a queen."

"All Italian women do," replied Gina proudly. "Her father's name is Colonna."

Emboldened by Francesca's modest rank, Rodolphe had an awning fitted to his boat and cushions in the stern. When this was done, the lover came to propose to Francesca to come out on the lake. The Italian accepted, no doubt to carry out her part of a young English Miss in the eyes of the villagers, but she brought Gina with her. Francesca Colonna's lightest actions betrayed a superior education and the highest social rank. By the way in which she took her place at the end of the boat Rodolphe felt himself in some sort cut off from her, and, in the face of a look of pride worthy of an aristocrat, the familiarity he had intended fell dead. By a glance Francesca made herself a princess, with

all the prerogatives she might have enjoyed in the Middle Ages. She seemed to have read the thoughts of this vassal who was so audacious as to constitute himself her protector.

Already, in the furniture of the room where Francesca had received him, in her dress, and in the various trifles she made use of, Rodolphe had detected indications of a superior character and a fine fortune. All these observations now recurred to his mind; he became thoughtful after having been trampled on, as it were, by Francesca's dignity. Gina, her half-grown-up confidante, also seemed to have a mocking expression as she gave a covert or a side glance at Rodolphe. This obvious disagreement between the Italian lady's rank and her manners was a fresh puzzle to Rodolphe, who suspected some further trick like Gina's assumed dumbness.

"Where would you go, Signora Lamporani?" he asked.

"Towards Lucerne," replied Francesca in French.

"Good!" said Rodolphe to himself, "she is not startled by hearing me speak her name; she had, no doubt, foreseen that I should ask Gina—she is so cunning.—What is your quarrel with me?" he went on, going at last to sit down by her side, and asking her by a gesture to give him her hand, which she withdrew. "You are cold and ceremonious; what, in colloquial language, we should call *short*."

"It is true," she replied with a smile. "I am wrong. It is not good manners; it is vulgar. In French you would call it inartistic. It is better to be frank than to harbor cold or hostile feelings towards a friend, and you have already proved yourself my friend. Perhaps I have gone too far with you. You must have taken me to be a very ordinary woman."—Rodolphe made many signs of denial.—"Yes," said the bookseller's wife, going on without noticing this pantomime, which, however, she plainly saw. "I have detected that, and naturally I have reconsidered my conduct. Well! I will put an end to everything by a few words of deep truth. Understand this, Rodolphe: I feel in myself the strength to stifle a feeling if it were not in harmony with my ideas or anticipation of what true love is. I could love—as we can love in Italy, but I know my duty. No intoxication can make me forget it. Married without my consent to

that poor old man, I might take advantage of the liberty he so generously gives me; but three years of married life imply acceptance of its laws. Hence the most vehement passion would never make me utter, even involuntarily, a wish to find myself free.

"Emilio knows my character. He knows that without my heart, which is my own, and which I might give away, I should never allow anyone to take my hand. That is why I have just refused it to you. I desire to be loved and waited for with fidelity, nobleness, ardor, while all I can give is infinite tenderness of which the expression may not overstep the boundary of the heart, the permitted neutral ground. All this being thoroughly understood—Oh!" she went on with a girlish gesture, "I will be as coquettish, as gay, as glad, as a child which knows nothing of the dangers of familiarity."

This plain and frank declaration was made in a tone, an accent, and supported by a look which gave it the deepest stamp of truth.

"A Princess Colonna could not have spoken better," said Rodolphe, smiling.

"Is that," she answered with some haughtiness, "a reflection on the humbleness of my birth? Must your love flaunt a coat-of-arms? At Milan the noblest names are written over shop-doors: Sforza, Canova, Visconti, Trivulzio, Ursini; there are Archintos apothecaries; but, believe me, though I keep a shop, I have the feelings of a duchess."

"A reflection? Nay, madame, I meant it for praise."

"By a comparison?" she said archly.

"Ah, once for all," said he, "not to torture me if my words should ill express my feelings, understand that my love is perfect; it carries with it absolute obedience and respect."

She bowed as a woman satisfied, and said, "Then monsieur accepts the treaty?"

"Yes," said he. "I can understand that in a rich and powerful feminine nature the faculty of loving ought not to be wasted, and that you, out of delicacy, wished to restrain it. Ah! Francesca, at my age tenderness requited, and by so sublime, so royally beautiful a creature as you are—why,

it is the fulfillment of all my wishes. To love you as you desire to be loved—is not that enough to make a young man guard himself against every evil folly? Is it not to concentrate all his powers in a noble passion, of which in the future he may be proud, and which can leave none but lovely memories? If you could but know with what hues you have clothed the chain of Pilatus, the Rigi, and this superb lake——”

“I want to know,” said she, with the Italian artlessness which has always a touch of artfulness.

“Well, this hour will shine on all my life like a diamond on a queen’s brow.”

Francesca’s only reply was to lay her hand on Rodolphe’s.

“Oh dearest! forever dearest!—Tell me, have you never loved?”

“Never.”

“And you allow me to love you nobly, looking to Heaven for the utmost fulfillment?” he asked.

She gently bent her head. Two large tears rolled down Rodolphe’s cheeks.

“Why! what is the matter?” she cried, abandoning her imperial manner.

“I have now no mother whom I can tell of my happiness; she left this earth without seeing what would have mitigated her agony——”

“What?” said she.

“Her tenderness replaced by an equal tenderness——”

“*Povero mio!*” exclaimed the Italian, much touched. “Believe me,” she went on after a pause, “it is a very sweet thing, and to a woman, a strong element of fidelity to know that she is all in all on earth to the man she loves; to find him lonely, with no family, with nothing in his heart but his love—in short, to have him wholly to herself.”

When two lovers thus understand each other, the heart feels delicious peace, supreme tranquillity. Certainty is the basis for which human feelings crave, for it is never lacking to religious sentiment; a man is always certain of being fully repaid by God. Love never believes itself secure but by this resemblance to divine love. And the raptures of that moment

must have been fully felt to be understood: it is unique in life; it can never return no more, alas! than the emotions of youth. To believe in a woman, to make her your human religion, the fount of life, the secret luminary of all your least thoughts!—is not this a second birth? And a young man mingles with this love a little of the feeling he had for his mother.

Rodolphe and Francesca for some time remained in perfect silence, answering each other by sympathetic glances full of thoughts. They understood each other in the midst of one of the most beautiful scenes of nature, whose glories, interpreted by the glory in their hearts, helped to stamp on their minds the most fugitive details of that unique hour. There had not been the slightest shade of frivolity in Francesca's conduct. It was noble, large, and without any second thought. This magnanimity struck Rodolphe greatly, for in it he recognized the difference between the Italian and the French woman. The waters, the land, the sky, the woman, all were grandiose and suave, even their love in the midst of this picture, so vast in its expanse, so rich in detail, where the sternness of the snowy peaks and their hard folds standing clearly out against the blue sky, reminded Rodolphe of the circumstances which limited his happiness: a lovely country shut in by snows.

This delightful intoxication of soul was destined to be disturbed. A boat was approaching from Lucerne; Gina, who had been watching it attentively, gave a joyful start, though faithful to her part as a mute. The bark came nearer; when at length Francesca could distinguish the faces on board, she exclaimed, "Tito!" as she perceived a young man. She stood up, and remained standing at the risk of being drowned. "Tito! Tito!" cried she, waving her handkerchief.

Tito desired the boatmen to slacken, and the two boats pulled side by side. The Italian and Tito talked with such extreme rapidity, and in a dialect unfamiliar to a man who hardly knew even the Italian of books, that Rodolphe could neither hear nor guess the drift of this conversation. But Tito's handsome face, Francesca's familiarity, and Gina's

expression of delight, all aggrieved him. And indeed no lover can help being ill pleased at finding himself neglected for another, whoever he may be. Tito tossed a little leather bag to Gina, full of gold no doubt, and a packet of letters to Francesca, who began to read them, with a farewell wave of the hand to Tito.

"Get quickly back to Gersau," she said to the boatmen. "I will not let my poor Emilio pine ten minutes longer than he need."

"What has happened?" asked Rodolphe, as he saw Francesca finish reading the last letter.

"*La libertà!*" she exclaimed, with an artist's enthusiasm.

"*E denaro!*" added Gina, like an echo, for she had found her tongue.

"Yes," said Francesca, "no more poverty! For more than eleven months have I been working, and I was beginning to be tired of it. I am certainly not a literary woman."

"Who is this Tito?" asked Rodolphe.

"The Secretary of State to the financial department of the humble shop of the Colonnas, in other words, the son of our *ragionato*. Poor boy! he could not come by the Saint-Gothard, nor by the Mont-Cenis, nor by the Simplon; he came by sea, by Marseilles, and had to cross France. Well, in three weeks we shall be at Geneva, and living at our ease. Come, Rodolphe," she added, seeing sadness overspread the Parisian's face, "is not the Lake of Geneva quite as good as the Lake of Lucerne?"

"But allow me to bestow a regret on the Bergmanns' delightful house," said Rodolphe, pointing to the little promontory.

"Come and dine with us to add to your associations, *povero mio*," said she. "This is a great day; we are out of danger. My mother writes that within a year there will be an amnesty. Oh! *la cara patria!*"

These three words made Gina weep. "Another winter here," said she, "and I should have been dead!"

"Poor little Sicilian kid!" said Francesca, stroking Gina's head with an expression and an affection which made Rodolphe long to be so caressed, even if it were without love.

The boat grounded; Rodolphe sprang on to the sand, offered his hand to the Italian lady, escorted her to the door of the Bergmanns' house, and went to dress and return as soon as possible.

When he joined the librarian and his wife, who were sitting on the balcony, Rodolphe could scarcely repress an exclamation of surprise at seeing the prodigious change which the good news had produced in the old man. He now saw a man of about sixty, extremely well preserved, a lean Italian, as straight as an I, with hair still black though thin and showing a white skull, with bright eyes, a full set of white teeth, a face like Cæsar, and on his diplomatic lips a sardonic smile, the almost false smile under which a man of good breeding hides his real feelings.

"Here is my husband under his natural form," said Francesca gravely.

"He is quite a new acquaintance," replied Rodolphe, bewildered.

"Quite," said the librarian; "I have played many a part, and know well how to make up. Ah! I played one in Paris under the Empire, with Bourrienne, Mme. Murat, Mme. d'Abrantis *e tuttè quanti*. Everything we take the trouble to learn in our youth, even the most futile, is of use. If my wife had not received a man's education—an unheard-of thing in Italy—I should have been obliged to chop wood to get my living here. *Povera* Francesca! who would have told me that she would some day maintain me?"

As he listened to this worthy bookseller, so easy, so affable, so hale, Rodolphe scented some mystification, and preserved the watchful silence of a man who has been duped.

"*Che avete, signor?*" Francesca asked with simplicity. "Does our happiness sadden you?"

"Your husband is a young man," he whispered in her ear.

She broke into such a frank, infectious laugh that Rodolphe was still more puzzled.

"He is but sixty-five, at your service," said she; "but I can assure you that even that is something—to be thankful for!"

"I do not like to hear you jest about an affection so



sacred as this, of which you yourself prescribed the conditions."

"*Zitto!*" said she, stamping her foot, and looking whether her husband were listening. "Never disturb the peace of mind of that dear man, as simple as a child, and with whom I can do what I please. He is under my protection," she added. "If you could know with what generosity he risked his life and fortune because I was a Liberal! for he does not share my political opinions. Is not that love, M. Frenchman?—But they are like that in his family. Emilio's younger brother was deserted for a handsome youth by the woman he loved. He thrust his sword through his own heart ten minutes after he had said to his servant, 'I could of course kill my rival, but it would grieve the *Diva* too deeply.'"

This mixture of dignity and banter, of haughtiness and playfulness, made Francesca at this moment the most fascinating creature in the world. The dinner and the evening were full of cheerfulness, justified, indeed, by the relief of the two refugees, but depressing to Rodolphe.

"Can she be fickle?" he asked himself as he returned to the Stopfers' house. "She sympathized in my sorrow, and I cannot take part in her joy!"

He blamed himself, justifying this girl-wife.

"She has no taint of hypocrisy, and is carried away by impulse," thought he, "and I want her to be like a Parisian woman."

Next day and the following days, in fact, for twenty days after, Rodolphe spent all his time at the Bergmanns', watching Francesca without having determined to watch her. In some souls admiration is not independent of a certain penetration. The young Frenchman discerned in Francesca the imprudence of girlhood, the true nature of a woman as yet unbroken, sometimes struggling against her love, and at other moments yielding and carried away by it. The old man certainly behaved to her as a father to his daughter, and Francesca treated him with a deeply felt gratitude which roused her instinctive nobleness. The situation and the wo-

man were to Rodolphe an impenetrable enigma, of which the solution attracted him more and more.

These last days were full of secret joys, alternating with melancholy moods, with tiffs and quarrels even more delightful than the hours when Rodolphe and Francesca were of one mind. And he was more and more fascinated by this tenderness apart from wit, always and in all things the same, an affection that was jealous of mere nothings—already!

“You care very much for luxury?” said he one evening to Francesca, who was expressing her wish to get away from Gersau, where she missed many things.

“I!” cried she. “I love luxury as I love the arts, as I love a picture by Raphael, a fine horse, a beautiful day, or the Bay of Naples. Emilio,” she went on, “have I ever complained here during our days of privation?”

“You would not have been yourself if you had,” replied the old man gravely.

“After all, is it not in the nature of plain folks to aspire to grandeur?” she asked, with a mischievous glance at Rodolphe and at her husband. “Were my feet made for fatigue?” she added, putting out two pretty little feet. “My hands”—and she held one out to Rodolphe—“were those hands made to work?—Leave us,” she said to her husband; “I want to speak to him.”

The old man went into the drawing-room with sublime good faith; he was sure of his wife.

“I will not have you come with us to Geneva,” she said to Rodolphe. “It is a gossiping town. Though I am far above the nonsense the world talks, I do not choose to be calumniated, not for my own sake, but for his. I make it my pride to be the glory of that old man, who is, after all, my only protector. We are leaving; stay here a few days. When you come on to Geneva, call first on my husband, and let him introduce you to me. Let us hide our great and unchangeable affection from the eyes of the world. I love you; you know it; but this is how I will prove it to you—you shall never discern in my conduct anything whatever that may arouse your jealousy.”

She drew him into a corner of the balcony, kissed him on the forehead, and fled, leaving him in amazement.

Next day Rodolphe heard that the lodgers at the Bergmanns' had left at daybreak. It then seemed to him intolerable to remain at Gersau, and he set out for Vevay by the longest route, starting sooner than was necessary. Attracted to the waters of the lake where the beautiful Italian awaited him, he reached Geneva by the end of October. To avoid the discomforts of the town he took rooms in a house at Eaux-Vives, outside the walls. As soon as he was settled, his first care was to ask his landlord, a retired jeweler, whether some Italian refugees from Milan had not lately come to reside at Geneva.

"Not so far as I know," replied the man. "Prince and Princess Colonna of Rome have taken M. Jeanrenaud's place for three years; it is one of the finest on the lake. It is situated between the Villa Diodati and that of M. Lafin-de-Dieu, let to the Vicomtesse de Beauséant. Prince Colonna has come to see his daughter and his son-in-law Prince Gandolphini, a Neapolitan, or if you like, a Sicilian, an old adherent of King Murat's, and a victim of the last revolution. These are the last arrivals at Geneva, and they are not Milanese. Serious steps had to be taken, and the Pope's interest in the Colonna family was invoked, to obtain permission from the foreign powers and the King of Naples for the Prince and Princess Gandolphini to live here. Geneva is anxious to do nothing to displease the Holy Alliance to which it owes its independence. *Our* part is not to ruffle foreign courts: there are many foreigners here, Russians and English."

"Even some Genevese."

"Yes, monsieur, our lake is so fine! Lord Byron lived here about seven years at the Villa Diodati, which everyone goes to see now, like Coppet and Ferney."

"You cannot tell me whether within a week or so a bookseller from Milan has come with his wife—named Lamporani, one of the leaders of the last revolution?"

"I could easily find out by going to the Foreigners' Club," said the jeweler.

Rodolphe's first walk was very naturally to the Villa Diodati, the residence of Lord Byron, whose recent death added to its attractiveness: for is not death the consecration of genius?

The road to Eaux-Vives follows the shore of the lake, and, like all the roads in Switzerland, is very narrow; in some spots, in consequence of the configuration of the hilly ground, there is scarcely space for two carriages to pass each other.

At a few yards from the Jeanrenauds' house, which he was approaching without knowing it, Rodolphe heard the sound of a carriage behind him, and, finding himself in a sunk road, he climbed to the top of a rock to leave the road free. Of course he looked at the approaching carriage—an elegant English phaeton, with a splendid pair of English horses. He felt quite dizzy as he beheld in this carriage Francesca, beautifully dressed, by the side of an old lady as hard as a cameo. A servant blazing with gold lace stood behind. Francesca recognized Rodolphe, and smiled at seeing him like a statue on a pedestal. The carriage, which the lover followed with his eyes as he climbed the hill, turned in at the gate of a country house, towards which he ran.

"Who lives here?" he asked of the gardener.

"Prince and Princess Colonna, and Prince and Princess Gandolphini."

"Have they not just driven in?"

"Yes, sir."

In that instant a veil fell from Rodolphe's eyes; he saw clearly the meaning of the past.

"If only this is her last piece of trickery!" thought the thunderstruck lover to himself.

He trembled lest he should have been the plaything of a whim, for he had heard what a *capriccio* might mean in an Italian. But what a crime had he committed in the eyes of a woman—in accepting a born princess as a citizen's wife! in believing that a daughter of one of the most illustrious houses of the Middle Ages was the wife of a bookseller! The consciousness of his blunders increased Rodolphe's desire to know whether he would be ignored and

repelled. He asked for Prince Gandolphini, sending in his card, and was immediately received by the false Lamporani, who came forward to meet him, welcomed him with the best possible grace, and took him to walk on a terrace whence there was a view of Geneva, the Jura, the hills covered with villas, and below them a wide expanse of the lake.

"My wife is faithful to the lakes, you see," he remarked, after pointing out the details to his visitor. "We have a sort of concert this evening," he added, as they returned to the splendid Villa Jeanrenaud. "I hope you will do me and the Princess the pleasure of seeing you. Two months of poverty endured in intimacy are equal to years of friendship."

Though he was consumed by curiosity, Rodolphe dared not ask to see the Princess; he slowly made his way back to Eaux-Vives, looking forward to the evening. In a few hours his passion, great as it had already been, was augmented by his anxiety and by suspense as to future events. He now understood the necessity for making himself famous, that he might some day find himself socially speaking, on a level with his idol. In his eyes Francesca was made really great by the simplicity and ease of her conduct at Gersau. Princess Colonna's haughtiness, so evidently natural to her, alarmed Rodolphe, who would find enemies in Francesca's father and mother—at least so he might expect; and the secrecy which Princess Gandolphini had so strictly enjoined on him now struck him as a wonderful proof of affection. By not choosing to compromise the future, had she not confessed that she loved him?

At last nine o'clock struck; Rodolphe could get into a carriage and say with an emotion that is very intelligible, "To the Villa Jeanrenaud—to Prince Gandolphini's."

At last he saw Francesca, but without being seen by her. The Princess was standing quite near the piano. Her beautiful hair, so thick and long, was bound with a golden fillet. Her face, in the light of wax candles, had the brilliant pallor peculiar to Italians, and which looks its best only by artificial light. She was in full evening dress, showing her fascinating shoulders, the figure of a girl, and the arms of an antique

statue. Her sublime beauty was beyond all possible rivalry, though there were some charming English and Russian ladies present, the prettiest women of Geneva, and other Italians, among them the dazzling and illustrious Princess Varese, and the famous singer Tinti, who was at that moment singing.

Rodolphe, leaning against the door-post, looked at the Princess, turning on her the fixed, tenacious, attracting gaze, charged with the full, insistent will which is concentrated in the feeling called desire, and thus assumes the nature of a vehement command. Did the flame of that gaze reach Francesca? Was Francesca expecting each instant to see Rodolphe? In a few minutes she stole a glance at the door, as though magnetized by this current of love, and her eyes, without reserve, looked deep into Rodolphe's. A slight thrill quivered through that superb face and beautiful body; the shock to her spirit reacted: Francesca blushed! Rodolphe felt a whole life in this exchange of looks, so swift that it can only be compared to a lightning flash. But to what could his happiness compare? He was loved. The lofty Princess, in the midst of her world, in this handsome villa, kept the pledge given by the disguised exile, the capricious beauty of Bergmanns' lodgings. The intoxication of such a moment enslaves a man for life! A faint smile, refined and subtle, candid and triumphant, curled Princess Gandolphini's lips, and at a moment when she did not feel herself observed she looked at Rodolphe with an expression which seemed to ask his pardon for having deceived him as to her rank.

When the song was ended Rodolphe could make his way to the Prince, who graciously led him to his wife. Rodolphe went through the ceremonial of a formal introduction to Princess and Prince Colonna, and to Francesca. When this was over, the Princess had to take part in the famous quartet, *Mi manca la Voce*, which was sung by her with Tinti, with the famous tenor Genovese, and with a well-known Italian Prince then in exile, whose voice, if he had not been a Prince, would have made him one of the Princes of Art.

"Take that seat," said Francesca to Rodolphe, pointing to her own chair. "*Oimè!* I think there is some mistake in

my name; I have for the last minute been Princess Rodolphini."

It was said with an artless grace which revived, in this avowal hidden beneath a jest, the happy days at Gersau. Rodolphe reveled in the exquisite sensation of listening to the voice of the woman he adored, while sitting so close to her that one cheek was almost touched by the stuff of her dress and the gauze of her scarf. But when, at such a moment, *Mi manca la Voce* is being sung, and by the finest voices in Italy, it is easy to understand what it was that brought the tears to Rodolphe's eyes.

In love, as perhaps in all else, there are certain circumstances, trivial in themselves, but the outcome of a thousand little previous incidents, of which the importance is immense, as an epitome of the past and as a link with the future. A hundred times already we have felt the preciousness of the one we love; but a trifle—the perfect touch of two souls united during a walk perhaps by a single word, by some unlooked-for proof of affection, will carry the feeling to its supremest pitch. In short, to express this truth by an image which has been pre-eminently successful from the earliest ages of the world, there are in a long chain points of attachment needed where the cohesion is stronger than in the intermediate loops of rings. This recognition between Rodolphe and Francesca, at this party, in the face of the world, was one of those intense moments which join the future to the past, and rivet a real attachment more deeply in the heart. It was perhaps of these incidental rivets that Bossuet spoke when he compared to them the rarity of happy moments in our lives—he who had such a living and secret experience of love.

Next to the pleasure of admiring the woman we love, comes that of seeing her admired by everyone else. Rodolphe was enjoying both at once. Love is a treasury of memories, and though Rodolphe's was already full, he added to it pearls of great price; smiles shed aside for him alone, stolen glances, tones in her singing which Francesca addressed to him alone, but which made Tinti pale with jealousy, they were so much applauded. All his strength of desire, the special expression

of his soul, was thrown over the beautiful Roman, who became unchangeably the beginning and the end of all his thoughts and actions. Rodolphe loved as every woman may dream of being loved, with a force, a constancy, & tenacity, which made Francesca the very substance of his heart; he felt her mingling with his blood as pure blood, with his soul as a more perfect soul; she would henceforth underlie the least efforts of his life as the golden sand of the Mediterranean lies beneath the waves. In short, Rodolphe's lightest aspiration was now a living hope.

At the end of a few days, Francesca understood this boundless love; but it was so natural, and so perfectly shared by her that it did not surprise her. She was worthy of it.

"What is there that is strange?" said she to Rodolphe, as they walked on the garden terrace, when he had been betrayed into one of those outbursts of conceit which come so naturally to Frenchmen in the expression of their feelings—"what is extraordinary in the fact of your loving a young and beautiful woman, artist enough to be able to earn her living like Tinti, and of giving you some of the pleasures of vanity? What lout but would then become an Amadis? This is not in question between you and me. What is needed is that we both love faithfully, persistently; at a distance from each other for years, with no satisfaction but that of knowing that we are loved."

"Alas!" said Rodolphe, "will you not consider my fidelity as devoid of all merit when you see me absorbed in the efforts of devouring ambition? Do you imagine that I can wish to see you one day exchange the fine name of Gandolphini for that of a man who is a nobody? I want to become one of the most remarkable men of my country, to be rich, great—that you may be as proud of my name as of your own name of Colonna."

"I should be grieved to see you without such sentiments in your heart," she replied, with a bewitching smile. "But do not wear yourself out too soon in your ambitious labors. Remain young. They say that politics soon make a man old."

One of the rarest gifts in women is a certain gayety which



does not detract from tenderness. This combination of deep feeling with the lightness of youth added an enchanting grace at this moment to Francesca's charms. This is the key to her character; she laughs and she is touched; she becomes enthusiastic, and returns to arch raillery with a readiness, a facility, which make her the charming and exquisite creature she is, and for which her reputation is known outside Italy. Under the graces of a woman she conceals vast learning, thanks to the excessively monotonous and almost monastic life she led in the castle of the old Colonnas.

This rich heiress was at first intended for the cloister, being the fourth child of Prince and Princess Colonna; but the death of her two brothers, and of her elder sister, suddenly brought her out of her retirement, and made her one of the most brilliant matches in the Papal States. Her elder sister had been betrothed to Prince Gandolphini, one of the richest landowners in Sicily; and Francesca was married to him instead, so that nothing might be changed in the position of the family. The Colonnas and Gandolphinis had always intermarried.

From the age of nine till she was sixteen, Francesca, under the direction of a Cardinal of the family, had read all through the library of the Colonnas, to make weight against her ardent imagination by studying science, art, and letters. But in these studies she acquired the taste for independence and liberal ideas, which threw her, with her husband, into the ranks of the revolution. Rodolphe had not yet learned that, besides five living languages, Francesco knew Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. The charming creature perfectly understood that, for a woman, the first condition of being learned is to keep it deeply hidden.

Rodolphe spent the whole winter at Geneva. This winter passed like a day. When spring returned, notwithstanding the infinite delights of the society of a clever woman, wonderfully well informed, young and lovely, the lover went through cruel sufferings, endured indeed with courage, but which were sometimes legible in his countenance, and betrayed themselves in his manners or speech, perhaps because he believed that Francesca shared them. Now and again it

annoyed him to admire her calmness. Like an Englishwoman, she seemed to pride herself on expressing nothing in her face; its serenity defied love: he longed to see her agitated; he accused her of having no feeling, for he believed in the tradition which ascribes to Italian women a feverish excitability.

"I am a Roman!" Francesca gravely replied one day when she took quite seriously some banter on this subject from Rodolphe.

There was a depth of tone in her reply which gave it the appearance of scathing irony, and which set Rodolphe's pulses throbbing. The month of May spread before them the treasures of her fresh verdure; the sun was sometimes as powerful as at midsummer. The two lovers happened to be at a part of the terrace where the rock rises abruptly from the lake, and were leaning over the stone parapet that crowns the wall above a flight of steps leading down to a landing-stage. From the neighboring villa, where there is a similar stairway, a boat presently shot out like a swan, its flag flaming, its crimson awning spread over a lovely woman comfortably reclining on red cushions, her hair wreathed with real flowers; the boatman was a young man dressed like a sailor, and rowing with all the more grace because he was under the lady's eye.

"They are happy!" exclaimed Rodolphe, with bitter emphasis. "Claire de Bourgogne, the last survivor of the only house which could ever vie with the royal family of France——"

"Oh! of a bastard branch, and that a female line."

"At any rate, she is Vicomtesse de Beauséant; and she did not——"

"Did not hesitate, you would say, to bury herself here with M. Gaston de Nueil, you would say," replied the daughter of the Colonnas. "She is only a Frenchwoman; I am an Italian, my dear sir!"

Francesca turned away from the parapet, leaving Rodolphe, and went to the further end of the terrace, whence there is a wide prospect of the lake. Watching her as she slowly walked away, Rodolphe suspected that he had wounded

her soul, at once so simple and so wise, so proud and so humble. It turned him cold; he followed Francesca, who signed to him to leave her to herself. But he did not heed the warning, and detected her wiping away her tears. Tears! in so strong a nature.

“Francesca,” said he, taking her hand, “is there a single regret in your heart?”

She was silent, disengaged her hand which held her embroidered handkerchief, and again dried her eyes.

“Forgive me!” he said. And with a rush, he kissed her eyes to wipe away the tears.

Francesca did not seem aware of his passionate impulse, she was so violently agitated. Rodolphe, thinking she consented, grew bolder; he put his arm round her, clasped her to his heart, and snatched a kiss. But she freed herself by a dignified movement of offended modesty, and, standing a yard off, she looked at him without anger, but with firm determination.

“Go this evening,” she said. “We meet no more till we meet at Naples.”

The order was stern, but it was obeyed, for it was Francesca’s will.

On his return to Paris, Rodolphe found in his rooms a portrait of Princess Gandolphini painted by Schinner, as Schinner can paint. The artist had passed through Geneva on his way to Italy. As he had positively refused to paint the portraits of several women, Rodolphe did not believe that the Prince, anxious as he was for a portrait of his wife, would be able to conquer the great painter’s objection; but Francesca, no doubt, had bewitched him, and obtained from him—which was almost a miracle—an original portrait for Rodolphe, and a duplicate for Emilio. She told him this in a charming and delightful letter, in which the mind indemnified itself for the reserve required by the worship of the proprieties. The lover replied. Thus began, never to cease, a regular correspondence between Rodolphe and Francesca, the only indulgence they allowed themselves.

Rodolphe, possessed by an ambition sanctified by his love,

set to work. First he longed to make his fortune, and risked his all in an undertaking to which he devoted all his faculties as well as his capital; but he, an inexperienced youth, had to contend against duplicity, which won the day. Thus three years were lost in a vast enterprise, three years of struggling and courage.

The Villèle ministry fell just when Rodolphe was ruined. The valiant lover thought he would seek in politics what commercial industry had refused him; but before braving the storms of this career, he went, all wounded and sick at heart, to have his bruises healed and his courage revived at Naples, where the Prince and Princess had been reinstated in their place and rights on the King's accession. This, in the midst of his warfare, was a respite full of delights; he spent three months at the Villa Gandolphi, rocked in hope.

Rodolphe then began again to construct his fortune. His talents were already known; he was about to attain the desires of his ambition; a high position was promised him as the reward of his zeal, his devotion, and his past services, when the storm of July 1830 broke, and again his bark was swamped.

She, and God! These are the only witnesses of the brave efforts, the daring attempts of a young man gifted with fine qualities, but to whom, so far, the protection of luck—the god of fools—has been denied. And this indefatigable wrestler, upheld by love, comes back to fresh struggles, lighted on his way by an always friendly eye, an ever faithful heart.

Lovers! Pray for him!

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As she finished this narrative, Mlle. de Watteville's cheeks were on fire; there was a fever in her blood. She was crying—but with rage. This little novel, inspired by the literary style then in fashion, was the first reading of the kind that Rosalie had ever had the chance of devouring. Love was depicted in it, if not by a master-hand, at any rate by a man who seemed to give his own impressions; and truth,

even if unskilled, could not fail to touch a virgin soul. Here lay the secret of Rosalie's terrible agitation, of her fever and her tears; she was jealous of Francesca Colonna.

She never for an instant doubted the sincerity of this poetical flight; Albert had taken pleasure in telling the story of his passion, while changing the names of persons and perhaps of places. Rosalie was possessed by infernal curiosity. What woman but would, like her, have wanted to know her rival's name—for she too loved! As she read these pages, to her really contagious, she had said solemnly to herself, "I love him!"—She loved Albert, and felt in her heart a gnawing desire to fight for him, to snatch him from this unknown rival. She reflected that she knew nothing of music, and that she was not beautiful.

"He will never love me!" thought she.

This conclusion aggravated her anxiety to know whether she might not be mistaken, whether Albert really loved an Italian Princess, and was loved by her. In the course of this fateful night, the power of swift decision, which had characterized the famous Watteville, was fully developed in his descendant. She devised those whimsical schemes, round which hovers the imagination of most young girls when, in the solitude to which some injudicious mothers confine them, they are aroused by some tremendous event which the system of repression to which they are subjected could neither foresee nor prevent. She dreamed of descending by a ladder from the kiosk into the garden of the house occupied by Albert; of taking advantage of the lawyer's being asleep to look through the window into his private room. She thought of writing to him, or of bursting the fetters of Besançon society by introducing Albert to the drawing-room of the Hôtel de Rupt. This enterprise, which to the Abbé de Grancey even would have seemed the climax of the impossible, was a mere passing thought.

"Ah!" said she to herself, "my father has a dispute pending as to his land at Les Rouxeys. I will go there! If there is no lawsuit, I will manage to make one, and *he* shall come into our drawing-room!" she cried, as she sprang out of bed and to the window to look at the fascinating gleam

which shone through Albert's nights. The clock struck one; he was still asleep.

"I shall see him when he gets up; perhaps he will come to his window."

At this instant M<sup>lle</sup>. de Watteville was witness to an incident which promised to place in her power the means of knowing Albert's secrets. By the light of the moon she saw a pair of arms stretched out from the kiosk to help Jérôme, Albert's servant, to get across the coping of the wall and step into the little building. In Jérôme's accomplice Rosalie at once recognized Mariette the lady's-maid.

"Mariette and Jérôme!" said she to herself. "Mariette, such an ugly girl! Certainly they must be ashamed of themselves."

Though Mariette was horribly ugly and six and thirty, she had inherited several plots of land. She had been seventeen years with Mme. de Watteville, who valued her highly for her bigotry, her honesty, and long service, and she had no doubt saved money and invested her wages and perquisites. Hence, earning about ten louis a year, she probably had by this time, including compound interest and her little inheritance, not less than ten thousand francs.

In Jérôme's eyes ten thousand francs could alter the laws of optics; he saw in Mariette a neat figure; he did not perceive the pits and seams which virulent smallpox had left on her flat, parched face; to him the crooked mouth was straight; and ever since Savaron, by taking him into his service, had brought him so near to the Watteilles' house, he had laid siege systematically to the maid, who was as prim and sanctimonious as her mistress, and who, like every ugly old maid, was far more exacting than the handsomest.

If the night scene in the kiosk is thus fully accounted for to all perspicacious readers, it was not so to Rosalie, though she derived from it the most dangerous lesson that can be given, that of a bad example. A mother brings her daughter up strictly, keeps her under her wing for seventeen years, and then, in one hour, a servant girl destroys the long and painful work, sometimes by a word, often indeed by a

gesture! Rosalie got into bed again, not without considering how she might take advantage of her discovery.

Next morning, as she went to Mass accompanied by Mariette—her mother was not well—Rosalie took the maid's arm, which surprised the country wench not a little.

"Mariette," said she, "is Jérôme in his master's confidence?"

"I do not know, mademoiselle."

"Do not play the innocent with me," said Mlle. de Watteville dryly. "You let him kiss you last night under the kiosk; I no longer wonder that you so warmly approved of my mother's ideas for the improvements she planned."

Rosalie could feel how Mariette was trembling by the shaking of her arm.

"I wish you no ill," Rosalie went on. "Be quite easy; I shall not say a word to my mother, and you can meet Jérôme as often as you please."

"But, mademoiselle," replied Mariette, "it is perfectly respectable; Jérôme honestly means to marry me——"

"But then," said Rosalie, "why meet at night?"

Mariette was dumfounded, and could make no reply.

"Listen, Mariette; I am in love too! In secret and without any return. I am, after all, my father's and mother's only child. You have more to hope for from me than from anyone else in the world——"

"Certainly, mademoiselle, and you may count on us for life or death," exclaimed Mariette, rejoiced at the unexpected turn of affairs.

"In the first place, silence for silence," said Rosalie. "I will not marry M. de Soulas; but one thing I will have, and must have; my help and favor are yours on one condition only."

"What is that?"

"I must see the letters which M. Savaron sends to the post by Jérôme."

"But what for?" said Mariette in alarm.

"Oh! merely to read them, and you yourself shall post them afterwards. It will cause a little delay; that is all."

At this moment they went into church, and each of them, instead of reading the order of Mass, fell into her own train of thought.

"Dear, dear, how many sins are there in all that?" thought Mariette.

Rosalie, whose soul, brain, and heart were completely upset by reading the story, by this time regarded it as history, written for her rival. By dint of thinking of nothing else, like a child, she ended by believing that the *Eastern Review* was no doubt forwarded to Albert's lady-love.

"Oh!" said she to herself, her head buried in her hands in the attitude of a person lost in prayer. "Oh! how can I get my father to look through the list of people to whom the *Review* is sent?"

After breakfast she took a turn in the garden with her father, coaxing and cajoling him, and brought him to the kiosk.

"Do you suppose, my dear little papa, that our *Review* is ever read abroad?"

"It is but just started——"

"Well, I will wager that it is."

"It is hardly possible."

"Just go and find out, and note the names of any subscribers out of France."

Two hours later M. de Watteville said to his daughter—

"I was right; there is not one foreign subscriber as yet. They hope to get some at Neufchâtel, at Berne, and at Geneva. One copy is, in fact, sent to Italy, but it is not paid for—to a Milanese lady at her country house at Belgirate, on Lago Maggiore."

"What is her name?"

"The Duchesse d'Argaiolo."

"Do you know her, papa?"

"I have heard about her. She was by birth a Princess Soderini, a Florentine, a very great lady, and quite as rich as her husband, who has one of the largest fortunes in Lombardy. Their villa on the Lago Maggiore is one of the sights of Italy."



Two days after, Mariette placed the following letter in Mlle. de Watteville's hands:—

*Albert Savaron to Léopold Hannequin.*

“Yes, 'tis so, my dear friend; I am at Besançon, while you thought I was traveling. I would not tell you anything till success should begin, and now it is dawning. Yes, my dear Léopold: after so many abortive undertakings, over which I have shed the best of my blood, have wasted so many efforts, spent so much courage, I have made up my mind to do as you have done—to start on a beaten path, on the high road, as the longest but the safest. I can see you jump with surprise in your lawyer's chair!

“But do not suppose that anything is changed in my personal life, of which you alone in the world know the secret, and that under the reservations *she* insists on. I did not tell you, my friend; but I was horribly weary of Paris. The outcome of the first enterprise, on which I had founded all my hopes, and which came to a bad end in consequence of the utter rascality of my two partners, who combined to cheat and fleece me—me, though everything was done by my energy—made me give up the pursuit of a fortune after the loss of three years of my life. One of these years was spent in the law courts, and perhaps I should have come worse out of the scrape if I had not been made to study law when I was twenty.

“I made up my mind to go into politics solely, to the end that I may some day find my name in a list for promotion to the Senate under the title of Comte Albert Savaron de Savarus, and so revive in France a good name now extinct in Belgium—though indeed I am neither legitimate nor legitimized.”

“Ah! I knew it! He is of noble birth!” exclaimed Rosalie, dropping the letter.

“You know how conscientiously I studied, how faithful and useful I was as an obscure journalist, and how excellent a secretary to the statesman who, on his part, was true to me in 1829. Flung to the depths once more by the revolu-

tion of July just when my name was becoming known, at the very moment when, as Master of Appeals, I was about to find my place as a necessary wheel in the political machine, I committed the blunder of remaining faithful to the fallen, and fighting for them, without them. Oh! why was I but three and thirty, and why did I not apply to you to make me eligible? I concealed from you all my devotedness and my dangers. What would you have? I was full of faith. We should not have agreed.

“Ten months ago, when you saw me so gay and contented, writing my political articles, I was in despair; I foresaw my fate, at the age of thirty-seven, with two thousand francs for my whole fortune, without the smallest fame, just having failed in a noble undertaking, the founding, namely, of a daily paper, answering only to a need of the future instead of appealing to the passions of the moment. I did not know which way to turn, and I felt my own value! I wandered about, gloomy and hurt, through the lonely places of Paris—Paris which had slipped through my fingers—thinking of my crushed ambitions, but never giving them up. Oh, what frantic letters I wrote at that time to *her*, my second conscience, my other self! Sometimes I would say to myself: ‘Why did I sketch so vast a programme of life? Why demand everything? Why not wait for happiness while devoting myself to some mechanical employment?’

“I then looked about me for some modest appointment by which I might live. I was about to get the editorship of a paper under a manager who did not know much about it, a man of wealth and ambition, when I took fright. ‘Would *she* ever accept as her husband a man who had stooped so low?’ I wondered.

“This reflection made me two and twenty again. But, oh, my dear Léopold, how the soul is worn by these perplexities! What must not caged eagles suffer, and imprisoned lions!—They suffer what Napoleon suffered, not at Saint-Helena, but on the Quay of the Tuileries, on the 10th of August, when he saw Louis XVI. defending himself so badly while he could have quelled the insurrection; as he actually did, on the same spot, a little later, in Vendémiaire. Well,

my life has been a torment of that kind, extending over four years. How many a speech to the Chamber have I not delivered in the deserted alleys of the Bois de Boulogne! These wasted harangues have at any rate sharpened my tongue and accustomed my mind to formulate its ideas in words. And while I was undergoing this secret torture you were getting married, you had paid for your business, you were made law-clerk to the Maire of your district, after gaining the cross for a wound at Saint-Merri.

“Now, listen. When I was a small boy and tortured cock-chafers, the poor insects had one form of struggle which used almost to put me in a fever. It was when I saw them making repeated efforts to fly but without getting away, though they could spread their wings. We used to say, ‘They are marking time.’ Now, was this sympathy? Was it a vision of my own future?—Oh! to spread my wings and yet be unable to fly! That has been my predicament since that fine undertaking by which I was disgusted, but which has now made four families rich.

“At last, seven months ago, I determined to make myself a name at the Paris Bar, seeing how many vacancies had been left by the promotion of several lawyers to eminent positions. But when I remembered the rivalry I had seen among men of the Press, and how difficult it is to achieve anything of any kind in Paris, the arena where so many champions meet, I came to a determination painful to myself, but certain in its results, and perhaps quicker than any other. In the course of our conversations you had given me a picture of the society of Besançon, of the impossibility for a stranger to get on there, to produce the smallest effect, to get into society, or to succeed in any way whatever. It was there that I determined to set up my flag, thinking, and rightly, that I should meet with no opposition, but find myself alone to canvass for the election. The people of the Comté will not meet the outsider? The outsider will not meet them! They refuse to admit him to their drawing-rooms, he will never go there! He never shows himself anywhere, not even in the streets! But there is one class that elects the deputies—the commercial class. I am going espe-

cially to study commercial questions, with which I am already familiar; I will gain their lawsuits. I will effect compromises, I will be the greatest pleader in Besançon. By and by I will start a *Review*, in which I will defend the interests of the country, will create them, or preserve them, or resuscitate them. When I shall have won a sufficient number of votes, my name will come out of the urn. For a long time the unknown barrister will be treated with contempt, but some circumstance will arise to bring him to the front—some unpaid defense, or a case which no other pleader will undertake.

“Well, my dear Léopoldi, I packed up my books in eleven cases, I bought such law books as might prove useful, and I sent everything off, furniture and all, by carrier to Besançon. I collected my diplomas, and I went to bid you good-bye. The mail coach dropped me at Besançon, where, in three days’ time, I chose a little set of rooms looking out over some gardens. I sumptuously arranged the mysterious private room where I spend my nights and days, and where the portrait of my divinity reigns—of her to whom my life is dedicate, who fills it wholly, who is the mainspring of my efforts, the secret of my courage, the cause of my talents. Then, as soon as the furniture and books had come, I engaged an intelligent man-servant, and there I sat for five months like a hibernating marmot.

“My name had, however, been entered on the list of lawyers in the town. At last I was called one day to defend an unhappy wretch at the Assizes, no doubt in order to hear me speak for once! One of the most influential merchants of Besançon was on the jury; he had a difficult task to fulfill; I did my utmost for the man, and my success was absolute and complete. My client was innocent; I very dramatically secured the arrest of the real criminals, who had come forward as witnesses. In short, the Court and the public were united in their admiration. I managed to save the examining magistrate’s pride by pointing out the impossibility of detecting a plot so skillfully planned.

“Then I had to fight a case for my merchant, and won his suit. The Cathedral Chapter next chose me to defend a tremendous action against the town, which had been going

on for four years; I won that. Thus, after three trials, I had become the most famous advocate of Franche Comté.

“But I bury my life in the deepest mystery, and so hide my aims. I have adopted habits which prevent my accepting any invitations. I am only to be consulted between six and eight in the morning; I go to bed after my dinner, and work at night. The Vicar-General, a man of parts, and very influential, who placed the Chapter’s case in my hands after they had lost it in the lower court, of course professed their gratitude. ‘Monsieur,’ said I, ‘I will win your suit, but I want no fee; I want more’ (start of alarm on the Abbé’s part). ‘You must know that I am a great loser by putting myself forward in antagonism to the town. I came here only to leave the place as deputy. I mean to engage only in commercial cases, because commercial men return the members; they will distrust me if I defend “the priests”—for to them you are simply the priests. If I undertake your defense, it is because I was, in 1828, private secretary to such a minister’ (again a start of surprise on the part of my Abbé), ‘and Master of Appeals, under the name of Albert de Savarus’ (another start). ‘I have remained faithful to monarchical opinions; but, as you have not the majority of votes in Besançon, I must gain votes among the citizens. So the fee I ask of you is the votes you may be able secretly to secure for me at the opportune moment. Let us each keep our own counsel, and I will defend, for nothing, every case to which a priest of this diocese may be a party. Not a word about my previous life, and we will be true to each other.’

“When he came to thank me afterwards, he gave me a note for five hundred francs, and said in my ear, ‘The votes are a bargain all the same.’—I have in the course of five interviews made a friend, I think, of this Vicar-General.

“Now I am overwhelmed with business, and I undertake no cases but those brought me by merchants, saying that commercial questions are my specialty. This line of conduct attaches business men to me, and allows me to make friends with influential persons. So all goes well. Within a few months I shall have found a house to purchase in Besançon, so as to secure a qualification. I count on your lending me

the necessary capital for this investment. If I should die, if I should fail, the loss would be too small to be any consideration between you and me. You will get the interest out of the rental, and I shall take good care to look out for something cheap, so that you may lose nothing by this mortgage, which is indispensable.

"Oh! my dear Léopold, no gambler with the last remains of his fortune in his pocket, bent on staking it at the Cercle des Étrangers for the last time one night, when he must come away rich or ruined, ever felt such a perpetual ringing in his ears, such a nervous moisture on his palms, such a fevered tumult in his brain, such inward qualms in his body as I go through every day now that I am playing my last card in the game of ambition. Alas! my dear and only friend, for nearly ten years now have I been struggling. This battle with men and things, in which I have unceasingly poured out my strength and energy, and so constantly worn the springs of desire, has, so to speak, undermined my vitality. With all the appearance of a strong man of good health, I feel myself a wreck. Every day carries with it a shred of my inmost life. At every fresh effort I feel that I should never be able to begin again. I have no power, no vigor left but for happiness; and if it should never come to crown my head with roses, the *me* that is really me would cease to exist, I should be a ruined thing. I should wish for nothing more in the world. I should want to cease from living. You know that power and fame, the vast moral empire that I crave, is but secondary; it is to me only a means to happiness, the pedestal for my idol.

"To reach the goal and die, like the runner of antiquity! To see fortune and death stand on the threshold hand in hand! To win the beloved woman just when love is extinct! To lose the faculty of enjoyment after earning the right to be happy!—Of how many men has this been the fate!

"But there surely is a moment when Tantalus rebels, crosses his arms, and defies hell, throwing up his part of the eternal dupe. That is what I shall come to if anything should thwart my plan; if, after stooping to the dust of provincial life, prowling like a starving tiger round these

tradesmen, these electors, to secure their votes; if, after wrangling in these squalid cases, and giving them my time—the time I might have spent on Lago Maggiore, seeing the waters she sees, basking in her gaze, hearing her voice—if, after all, I failed to scale the tribune and conquer the glory that should surround the name that is to succeed to that of Argaiolo! Nay, more than this, Léopold; there are days when I feel a heady languor; deep disgust surges up from the depths of my soul, especially when, abandoned to long day-dreams, I have lost myself in anticipation of the joys of blissful love! May it not be that our desire has only a certain modicum of power, and that it perishes, perhaps, of a too lavish effusion of its essence? For, after all, at this present, my life is fair, illuminated by faith, work, and love.

“Farewell, my friend; I send love to your children, and beg you to remember me to your excellent wife.—Yours,

“ALBERT.”

Rosalie read this letter twice through, and its general purport was stamped on her heart. She suddenly saw the whole of Albert's previous existence, for her quick intelligence threw light on all the details, and enabled her to take it all in. By adding this information to the little novel published in the *Review*, she now fully understood Albert. Of course, she exaggerated the greatness, remarkable as it was, of this lofty soul and potent will, and her love for Albert thenceforth became a passion, its violence enhanced by all the strength of her youth, the weariness of her solitude, and the unspent energy of her character. Love is in a young girl the effect of a natural law; but when her craving for affection is centered in an exceptional man, it is mingled with the enthusiasm which overflows in a youthful heart. Thus Mlle. de Watteville had in a few days reached a morbid and very dangerous stage of enamored infatuation. The Baroness was much pleased with her daughter, who, being under the spell of her absorbing thoughts, never resisted her will, seemed to be devoted to feminine occupations, and realized her mother's ideal of a docile daughter.

The lawyer was now engaged in court two or three times

a week. Though he was overwhelmed with business, he found time to attend the trials, call on the litigious merchants, and conduct the *Review*; keeping up his personal mystery, from the conviction that the more covert and hidden was his influence, the more real it would be. But he neglected no means of success, reading up the list of electors of Besançon, and finding out their interests, their characters, their various friendships and antipathies. Did ever a Cardinal hoping to be made Pope give himself more trouble?

One evening Mariette, on coming to dress Rosalie for an evening party, handed to her, not without many groans over this treachery, a letter of which the address made Mlle. de Watteville shiver and redden and turn pale again as she read the address:—

*To Mme. la Duchesse d'Argaiolo* .  
*(née Princesse Soderini),*  
*À Belgirate,*  
*Lago Maggiore, Italy.*

In her eyes this direction blazed as the words *Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*, did in the eyes of Belshazzar. After concealing the letter, Rosalie went downstairs to accompany her mother to Mme. de Chavoncourt's; and as long as the endless evening lasted, she was tormented by remorse and scruples. She had already felt shame at having violated the secrecy of Albert's letter to Léopold; she had several times asked herself whether, if he knew of her crime, infamous inasmuch as it necessarily goes unpunished, the high-minded Albert could esteem her. Her conscience answered an uncompromising "No."

She had expiated her sin by self-imposed penances; she fasted, she mortified herself by remaining on her knees, her arms outstretched for hours, and repeating prayers all the time. She had compelled Mariette to similar acts of repentance; her passion was mingled with genuine asceticism, and was all the more dangerous.

"Shall I read that letter, shall I not?" she asked herself, while listening to the Chavoncourt girls. One was sixteen,



the other seventeen and a half. Rosalie looked upon her two friends as mere children because they were not secretly in love.—“If I read it,” she finally decided, after hesitating for an hour between Yes and No, “it shall, at any rate, be the last. Since I have gone so far as to see what he wrote to his friend, why should I not know what he says to *her*? If it is a horrible crime, is it not a proof of love? Oh, Albert! am I not your wife?”

When Rosalie was in bed she opened the letter, dated from day to day, so as to give the Duchess a faithful picture of Albert's life and feelings.

“25th.

“My dear Soul, all is well. To my other conquests I have just added an invaluable one: I have done a service to one of the most influential men who work the elections. Like the critics, who make other men's reputations but can never make their own, he makes deputies though he never can become one. The worthy man wanted to show his gratitude without loosening his purse-strings by saying to me: ‘Would you care to sit in the Chamber? I can get you returned as deputy.’

“‘If I ever made up my mind to enter on a political career,’ replied I hypocritically, ‘it would be to devote myself to the Comté, which I love, and where I am appreciated.’

“‘Well,’ he said, ‘we will persuade you, and through you we shall have weight in the Chamber, for you will distinguish yourself there.’

“And so, my beloved angel, say what you will, my perseverance will be rewarded. Ere long I shall, from the high place of the French Tribune, come before my country, before Europe. My name will be flung to you by the hundred voices of the French press.

“Yes, as you tell me, I was old when I came to Besançon, and Besançon has aged me more; but, like Sixtus V., I shall be young again the day after my election. I shall enter on my true life, my own sphere. Shall we not then stand in the same line? Count Savaron de Savarus, ambassador I know not where, may surely marry a Princess Soderini, the

widow of the Duc d'Argaiolo! Triumph restores the youth of men who have been preserved by incessant struggles. Oh, my Life! with what gladness did I fly from my library to my private room, to tell your portrait of this progress before writing to you! Yes, the votes I can command, those of the Vicar General, of the persons I can oblige, and of this client, make my election already sure

"26th.

"We have entered on the twelfth year since that blest evening when, by a look, the beautiful Duchess sealed the promises made by the exile Francesca. You, dear, are thirty-two, I am thirty-five; the dear Duke is seventy-seven—that is to say, ten years more than yours and mine put together, and he still keeps well! My patience is almost as great as my love, and indeed I need a few years yet to rise to the level of your name. As you see, I am in good spirits to-day, I can laugh; that is the effect of hope. Sadness or gladness, it all comes to me through you. The hope of success always carries me back to the day following that on which I saw you for the first time, when my life became one with yours as the earth turns to the light. *Qual pianto* are these eleven years, for this is the 26th of December, the anniversary of my arrival at your villa on the Lake of Geneva. For eleven years have I been crying to you, while you shine like a star set too high for man to reach it.

"27th.

"No, dearest, do not go to Milan; stay at Belgirate. Milan terrifies me. I do not like that odious Milanese fashion of chatting at the Scala every evening with a dozen persons, among whom it is hard if no one says something sweet. To me solitude is like the lump of amber in whose heart an insect lives forever in unchanging beauty. Thus the heart and soul of a woman remain pure and unaltered in the form of their first youth. Is it the *Tedeschi* that you regret?

"28th.

"Is your statue never to be finished? I should wish to have you in marble, in painting, in miniature, in every possible

form, to beguile my impatience. I still am waiting for the view of Belgirate from the south, and that of the balcony; these are all that I now lack. I am so extremely busy that to-day I can only write you nothing—but that nothing is everything. Was it not of nothing that God made the world? That nothing is a word, God's word: I love you!

“30th.

“Ah! I have received your journal. Thanks for your punctuality.—So you found great pleasure in seeing all the details of our first acquaintance thus set down? Alas! even while disguising them I was sorely afraid of offending you. We had no stories, and a *Review* without stories is a beauty without hair. Not being inventive by nature, and in sheer despair, I took the only poetry in my soul, the only adventure in my memory, and pitched it in the key in which it would bear telling; nor did I ever cease to think of you while writing the only literary production that will ever come from my heart, I cannot say from my pen. Did not the transformation of your fierce Sormano into Gina make you laugh?

“You ask after my health. Well, it is better than in Paris. Though I work enormously, the peacefulness of the surroundings has its effect on the mind. What really tries and ages me, dear angel, is the anguish of mortified vanity, the perpetual friction of Paris life, the struggle of rival ambitions. This peace is a balm.

“If you could imagine the pleasure your letter gives me!—the long, kind letter in which you tell me the most trivial incidents of your life. No! you women can never know to what a degree a true lover is interested in these trifles. It was an immense pleasure to see the pattern of your new dress. Can it be a matter of indifference to me to know what you wear? If your lofty brow is knit? If our writers amuse you? If Canalis's songs delight you? I read the books you read. Even to your boating on the lake every incident touched me. Your letter is so lovely, as sweet as your soul! Oh! flower of heaven, perpetually adored, could I have lived without those dear letters, which for eleven years have upheld me in my difficult path like a light, like

a perfume, like a steady chant, like some divine nourishment, like everything which can soothe and comfort life.

"Do not fail me! If you knew what anxiety I suffer the day before they are due, or the pain a day's delay can give me! Is she ill? Is he? I am midway between hell and paradise.

"*O mia cara diva*, keep up your music, exercise your voice, practice. I am enchanted with the coincidence of employments and hours by which, though separated by the Alps, we live by precisely the same rule. The thought charms me and gives me courage. The first time I undertook to plead here—I forgot to tell you this—I fancied that you were listening to me, and I suddenly felt the flash of inspiration which lifts the poet above mankind. If I am returned to the Chamber—oh! you must come to Paris to be present at my first appearance there!

"30th, Evening.

"Good heavens, how I love you! Alas! I have intrusted too much to my love and my hopes. An accident which should sink that overloaded bark would end my life! For three years now I have not seen you, and at the thought of going to Belgirate my heart beats so wildly that I am forced to stop.—To see you, to hear that girlish caressing voice! To embrace in my gaze that ivory skin, glistening under the candlelight, and through which I can read your noble mind! To admire your fingers playing on the keys, to drink in your whole soul in a look, in the tone of an *Oimè* or an *Alberto*! To walk by the blossoming orange trees, to live a few months in the bosom of that glorious scenery!—That is life. What folly it is to run after power, a name, fortune? But at Belgirate there is everything; there is poetry, there is glory! I ought to have made myself your steward, or, as that dear tyrant whom we cannot hate proposed to me, live there as *cavaliere servente*, only our passion was too fierce to allow of it.

"Farewell, my angel, forgive me my next fit of sadness in consideration of this cheerful mood; it has come as a beam of light from the touch of Hope, which has hitherto seemed to me a Will-o'-the-wisp."

"How he loves her!" cried Rosalie, dropping the letter, which seemed heavy in her hand. "After eleven years, to write like this!"

"Marianne," said Mlle. de Watteville to her maid next morning, "go and post this letter. Tell Jérôme that I know all I wished to know, and that he is to serve M. Albert faithfully. We will confess our sins, you and I, without saying to whom the letters belonged, nor to whom they were going. I was in the wrong; I alone am guilty."

"Mademoiselle has been crying?" said Marianne.

"Yes, but I do not want that my mother should perceive it; give me some very cold water."

In the midst of the storms of her passion Rosalie often listened to the voice of conscience. Touched by the beautiful fidelity of these two hearts, she had just said her prayers, telling herself that there was nothing left to her but to be resigned, and to respect the happiness of two beings worthy of each other, submissive to fate, looking to God for everything, without allowing themselves any criminal acts or wishes. She felt a better woman, and had a certain sense of satisfaction after coming to this resolution, inspired by the natural rectitude of youth. And she was confirmed in it by a girl's idea: She was sacrificing herself for *him*.

"She does not know how to love," thought she. "Ah! if it were I—I would give up everything to a man who loved me so.—To be loved!—When, by whom shall I be loved? That little M. de Soulas only loves my money; if I were poor, he would not even look at me."

"Rosalie, my child, what are you thinking about? You are working beyond the outline," said the Baroness to her daughter, who was making worsted-work slippers for the Baron.

Rosalie spent the winter of 1834-35 torn by secret tumults; but in the spring, in the month of April, when she reached the age of nineteen, she sometimes thought that it would be a fine thing to triumph over a Duchesse d'Argaiolo. In silence and solitude the prospect of this struggle had fanned her passion and her evil thoughts. She encouraged

her romantic daring by making plan after plan. Although such characters are an exception, there are, unfortunately, too many Rosalies in the world, and this story contains a moral which ought to serve them as a warning.

In the course of this winter Albert de Savarus had quietly made considerable progress in Besançon. Confident of success, he now impatiently awaited the dissolution of the Chamber. Among the men of the moderate party he had won the suffrages of one of the makers of Besançon, a rich contractor, who had very wide influence.

Wherever they settled the Romans took immense pains, and spent enormous sums to have an unlimited supply of good water in every town of their empire. At Besançon they drank the water from Arcier, a hill at some considerable distance from Besançon. The town stands in a horseshoe circumscribed by the river Doubs. Thus, to restore an aqueduct in order to drink the same water that the Romans drank, in a town watered by the Doubs, is one of those absurdities which only succeed in a country place where the most exemplary gravity prevails. If this whim could be brought home to the hearts of the citizens, it would lead to considerable outlay, and this expenditure would benefit the influential contractor.

Albert Savaron de Sarvarus opined that the water of the river was good for nothing but to flow under a suspension bridge, and that the only drinkable water was that from Arcier. Articles were printed in the *Review* which merely expressed the views of the commercial interest of Besançon. The nobility and the citizens, the Moderates and the Legitimists, the government party and the opposition, everybody, in short, was agreed that they must drink the same water as the Romans, and boast of a suspension bridge. The question of the Arcier water was the order of the day at Besançon. At Besançon—as in the matter of the two railways to Versailles—as for every standing abuse—there were private interests unconfessed which gave vital force to this idea. The reasonable folk in opposition to this scheme, who were indeed but few, were regarded as old women. No one talked of anything but of Savaron's two projects. And

thus, after eighteen months of underground labor, the ambitious lawyer had succeeded in stirring to its depths the most stagnant town in France, the most unyielding to foreign influence, in finding the length of its foot, to use a vulgar phrase, and exerting a preponderant influence without stirring from his own room. He had solved the singular problem of how to be powerful without being popular.

In the course of this winter he won seven lawsuits for various priests of Besançon. At moments he could breathe freely at the thought of his coming triumph. This intense desire, which made him work so many interests and devise so many springs, absorbed the last strength of his terribly overstrung soul. His disinterestedness was lauded, and he took his clients' fees without comment. But this disinterestedness was, in truth, moral usury; he counted on a reward far greater to him than all the gold in the world.

In the month of October 1834 he had bought, ostensibly to serve a merchant who was in difficulties, with money lent him by Léopold Hannequin, a house which gave him a qualification for election. He had not seemed to seek or desire this advantageous bargain.

"You are really a remarkable man," said the Abbé de Grancey, who, of course, had watched and understood the lawyer. The Vicar-General had come to introduce to him a canon who needed his professional advice. "You are a priest who has taken the wrong turning." This observation struck Savarus.

Rosalie, on her part, had made up her mind, in her strong girl's head, to get M. de Savarus into the drawing-room and acquainted with the society of the Hôtel de Rupt. So far she had limited her desires to seeing and hearing Albert. She had compounded, so to speak, and a composition is often no more than a truce.

Les Rouxey, the inherited estate of the Watteilles, was worth just ten thousand francs a year; but in other hands it would have yielded a great deal more. The Baron in his indifference—for his wife was to have, and in fact had, forty thousand francs a year—left the management of Les Rouxey to a sort of factotum, an old servant of the Watteilles

named Modinier. Nevertheless, whenever the Baron and his wife wished to go out of the town, they went to Les Rouxey, which is very picturesquely situated. The château and the park were, in fact, created by the famous Watteville, who in his active old age was passionately attached to this magnificent spot.

Between two precipitous hills—little peaks with bare summits known as the great and the little Rouxey—in the heart of a ravine where the torrents from the heights, with the Dent de Vilard at their head, come tumbling to join the lovely upper waters of the Doubs, Watteville had a huge dam constructed, leaving two cuttings for the overflow. Above this dam he made a beautiful lake, and below it two cascades; and these, uniting a few yards below the falls, formed a lovely little river to irrigate the barren, uncultivated valley, hitherto devastated by the torrent. This lake, this valley, and these two hills he inclosed in a ring fence, and built himself a retreat on the dam, which he widened to two acres by accumulating above it all the soil which had to be removed to make a channel for the river and the irrigation canals.

When the Baron de Watteville thus obtained the lake above his dam he was owner of the two hills, but not of the upper valley thus flooded, through which there had been at all times a right-of-way to where it ends in a horseshoe under the Dent de Vilard. But this ferocious old man was so wildly dreaded that so long as he lived no claim was urged by the inhabitants of Riceys, the little village on the further side of the Dent de Vilard. When the Baron died, he left the slopes of the two Rouxey hills joined by a strong wall, to protect from inundation the two lateral valleys opening into the valley of Rouxey, to the right and left at the foot of the Dent de Vilard. Thus he died the master of the Dent de Vilard.

His heirs asserted their protectorate of the village of Riceys, and so maintained the usurpation. The old assassin, the old renegade, the old Abbé Watteville, ended his career by planting trees and making a fine road over the shoulder of one of the Rouxey hills to join the highroad. The estate belonging to this park and house was extensive, but badly cul-



tivated; there were chalets on both hills and neglected forests of timber. It was all wild and deserted, left to the care of nature, abandoned to chance growths, but full of sublime and unexpected beauty. You may now imagine Les Rouxey.

It is unnecessary to complicate this story by relating all the prodigious trouble and the inventiveness stamped with genius, by which Rosalie achieved her end without allowing it to be suspected. It is enough to say that it was in obedience to her mother that she left Besançon in the month of May 1835, in an antique traveling carriage drawn by a pair of sturdy horses, and accompanied her father to Les Rouxey.

To a young girl love lurks in everything. When she rose, the morning after her arrival, Mlle. de Watteville saw from her bedroom window the fine expanse of water, from which the light mists rose like smoke, and were caught in the firs and larches, rolling up and along the hills till they reached the heights, and she gave a cry of admiration.

"They loved by the lakes! *She* lives by a lake! A lake is certainly full of love!" she thought.

A lake fed by snows has opalescent colors and a translucency that make it one huge diamond; but when it is shut in like that of Les Rouxey, between two granite masses covered with pines, when silence broods over it like that of the Savannahs or the Steppes, then everyone must exclaim as Rosalie did.

"We owe that," said her father, "to the notorious Watteville."

"On my word," said the girl, "he did his best to earn forgiveness. Let us go in a boat to the further end; it will give us an appetite for breakfast."

The Baron called two gardener lads who knew how to row, and took with him his prime minister Modinier. The lake was about six acres in breadth, in some places ten or twelve, and four hundred in length. Rosalie soon found herself at the upper end shut in by the Dent de Vilard, the Jungfrau of that little Switzerland.

"Here we are, M. le Baron," said Modinier, signing to the gardeners to tie up the boat; "will you come and look?"

"Look at what?" asked Rosalie.

"Oh, nothing!" exclaimed the Baron. "But you are a sensible girl; we have some little secrets between us, and I may tell you what ruffles my mind. Some difficulties have arisen since 1820 between the village authorities of Riceys and me, on account of this very Dent de Vilard, and I want to settle the matter without your mother's knowing anything about it, for she is stubborn; she is capable of flinging fire and flames broadcast, particularly if she should hear that the Mayor of Riceys, a Republican, got up this action as a sop to his people."

Rosalie had presence of mind enough to disguise her delight, so as to work more effectually on her father.

"What action?" said she.

"Mademoiselle, the people of Riceys," said Modinier, "have long enjoyed the right of grazing and cutting fodder on their side of the Dent de Vilard. Now M. Chantonnet, the Maire since 1830, declares that the whole Dent belongs to his district, and maintains that a hundred years ago, or more, there was a way through our grounds. You understand that in that case we should no longer have them to ourselves. Then this barbarian would end by saying, what the old men in the village say, that the ground occupied by the lake was appropriated by the Abbé de Watteville. That would be the end of Les Rouxey; what next?"

"Indeed, my child, between ourselves, it is the truth," said M. de Watteville simply. "The land is an usurpation, with no title deed but lapse of time. And, therefore, to avoid all worry, I should wish to come to a friendly understanding as to my border line on this side of the Dent de Vilard, and I will then raise a wall."

"If you give way to the municipality, it will swallow you up. You ought to have threatened Riceys."

"That is just what I told the master last evening," said Modinier. "But in confirmation of that view I proposed that he should come to see whether, on this side of the Dent or on the other, there may not be, high or low, some traces of an inclosure."

For a century the Dent de Vilard had been used by both parties without coming to extremities; it stood as a sort of

party wall between the communes of Riceys and Les Rouxey, yielding little profit. Indeed, the object in dispute, being covered with snow for six months in the year, was of a nature to cool their ardor. Thus it required all the hot blast by which the revolution of 1830 inflamed the advocates of the people, to stir up this matter, by which M. Chantonnit, the Mayor of Riceys, hoped to give a dramatic turn to his career on the peaceful frontier of Switzerland, and to immortalize his term of office. Chantonnit, as his name shows, was a native of Neuchâtel.

"My dear father," said Rosalie, as they got into the boat again, "I agree with Modinier. If you wish to secure the joint possession of the Dent de Vilard, you must act with decision, and get a legal opinion which will protect you against this enterprising Chantonnit. Why should you be afraid? Get the famous lawyer Savaron—engage him at once, lest Chantonnit should place the interests of the village in his hands. The man who won the case for the Chapter against the town can certainly win that of Watteville *versus* Riceys! Besides," she added, "Les Rouxey will some day be mine—not for a long time yet, I trust.—Well, then, do not leave me with a lawsuit on my hands. I like this place; I shall often live here, and add to it as much as possible. On those banks," and she pointed to the feet of the two hills, "I shall cut flower-beds and make the loveliest English gardens.—Let us go to Besançon and bring back with us the Abbé de Grancey, M. Savaron, and my mother, if she cares to come. You can then make up your mind; but in your place I should have done so already. Your name is Watteville, and you are afraid of a fight! If you should lose your case—well, I will never reproach you by a word!"

"Oh, if that is the way you take it," said the Baron, "I am quite ready; I will see the lawyer."

"Besides, a lawsuit is really great fun. It brings some interest into life, with coming and going and raging over it. You will have a great deal to do before you can get hold of the judges.—We did not see the Abbé de Grancey for three weeks, he was so busy!"

"But the very existence of the Chapter was involved,"

said M. de Watteville: "and then the Archbishop's pride, his conscience, everything that makes up the life of the priesthood, was at stake. That Savaron does not know what he did for the Chapter! He saved it!"

"Listen to me," said his daughter in his ear, "if you secure M. de Savaron, you will gain your suit, won't you? Well, then, let me advise you. You cannot get at M. Savaron excepting through M. de Grancey. Take my word for it, and let us together talk to the dear Abbé without my mother's presence at the interview, for I know a way of persuading him to bring the lawyer to us."

"It will be very difficult to avoid mentioning it to your mother!"

"The Abbé de Grancey will settle that afterwards. But just make up your mind to promise your vote to M. Savaron at the next election, and you will see!"

"Go to the election! take the oath?" cried the Baron de Watteville.

"What then!" said she.

"And what will your mother say?"

"She may even desire you to do it," replied Rosalie, knowing as she did from Albert's letter to Léopold how deeply the Vicar-General had pledged himself.

Four days after, the Abbé de Grancey called very early one morning on Albert de Savarus, having announced his visit the day before. The old priest had come to win over the great lawyer to the house of the Wattevilles, a proceeding which shows how much tact and subtlety Rosalie must have employed in an underhand way.

"What can I do for you, M. le Vicaire-Général?" asked Savarus.

The Abbé, who told his story with admirable frankness, was coldly heard by Albert.

"M. l'Abbé," said he, "it is out of the question that I should defend the interests of the Wattevilles, and you shall understand why. My part in this town is to remain perfectly neutral. I will display no colors; I must remain a mystery till the eve of my election. Now, to plead for the Wattevilles would mean nothing in Paris, but here!—Here, where

everything is discussed, I should be supposed by everyone to be an ally of your Faubourg Saint-Germain."

"What! do you suppose that you can remain unknown on the day of the election, when the candidates must oppose each other? It must then become known that your name is Savaron de Savarus, that you have held the appointment of Master of Appeals, that you are a man of the Restoration!"

"On the day of the election," said Savarus, "I will be all I am expected to be; and I intend to speak at the preliminary meetings."

"If you have the support of M. de Watteville and his party, you will get a hundred votes in a mass, and far more to be trusted than those on which you rely. It is always possible to produce division of interests; convictions are inseparable."

"The deuce is in it!" said Savarus. "I am attached to you, and I could do a great deal for you, Father! Perhaps we may compound with the Devil. Whatever M. de Watteville's business may be, by engaging Girardet, and prompting him, it will be possible to drag the proceedings out till the elections are over. I will not undertake to plead till the day after I am returned."

"Do this one thing," said the Abbé. "Come to the Hôtel de Rupt: there is a young person of nineteen there who, one of these days, will have a hundred thousand francs a year, and you can seem to be paying your court to her——"

"Ah! the young lady I sometimes see in the kiosk?"

"Yes, Mlle. Rosalie," replied the Abbé de Grancey. "You are ambitious. If she takes a fancy to you, you may be everything an ambitious man can wish—who knows? A minister perhaps. A man can always be a minister who adds a hundred thousand francs a year to your amazing talents."

"M. l'Abbé, if Mlle. de Watteville had three times her fortune, and adored me into the bargain, it would be impossible that I should marry her——"

"You are married?" exclaimed the Abbé.

"Not in church nor before the Maire, but morally speaking," said Savarus.

"That is even worse when a man cares about it as you

seem to care," replied the Abbé. "Everything that is not done, can be undone. Do not stake your fortune and your prospects on a woman's liking, any more than a wise man counts on a dead man's shoes before starting on his way."

"Let us say no more about Mlle. de Watteville," said Albert gravely, "and agree to the facts. At your desire—for I have a regard and respect for you—I will appear for M. de Watteville, but after the elections. Until then Girardet must conduct the case under my instructions. That is the utmost I can do."

"But there are questions involved which can only be settled after inspection of the localities," said the Vicar-General.

"Girardet can go," said Savarus. "I cannot allow myself, in the face of a town I know so well, to take any step which might compromise the supreme interests that lie beyond my election."

The Abbé left Savarus after giving him a keen look, in which he seemed to be laughing at the young athlete's uncompromising politics, while admiring his firmness.

"Ah! I would have dragged my father into a lawsuit—I would have done anything to get him here!" cried Rosalie to herself, standing in the kiosk and looking at the lawyer in his room, the day after Albert's interview with the Abbé, who had reported the result to her father. "I would have committed any mortal sin, and you will not enter the Wattevilles' drawing-room; I may not hear your fine voice! You make conditions when your help is required by the Wattevilles and the Rupts!—Well, God knows, I meant to be content with these small joys; with seeing you, hearing you speak, going with you to Les Rouxey, that your presence might to me make the place sacred. That was all I asked. But now—now I mean to be your wife.—Yes, yes; look at *her* portrait, at *her* drawing-room, *her* bedroom, at the four sides of *her* villa, the points of view from *her* gardens. You expect *her* statue? I will make *her* marble herself towards you!—After all, the woman does not love. Art, science, books, singing, music, have absorbed half her senses and her intelligence. She is old, too; she is past thirty; my Albert will not be happy!"

"What is the matter that you stay here, Rosalie?" asked her mother, interrupting her reflections. "M. de Soulas is in the drawing-room, and he observed your attitude, which certainly betrays more thoughtfulness than is due at your age."

"Then, is M. de Soulas a foe to thought?" asked Rosalie.

"Then you were thinking?" said Mme. de Watteville.

"Why, yes, mamma."

"Why, no! you were not thinking. You were staring at that lawyer's window with an attention that is neither becoming nor decent, and which M. de Soulas, of all men, ought never to have observed."

"Why?" said Rosalie.

"It is time," said the Baroness, "that you should know what our intentions are. Amédée likes you, and you will not be unhappy as Comtesse de Soulas."

Rosalie, as white as a lily, made no reply, so completely was she stupefied by contending feelings. And yet, in the presence of the man she had this instant begun to hate vehemently, she forced the kind of smile which a ballet dancer puts on for the public. Nay, she could even laugh; she had the strength to conceal her rage, which presently subsided, for she was determined to make use of this fat simpleton to further her designs.

"M. Amédée," said she, at a moment when her mother was walking ahead of them in the garden, affecting to leave the young people together, "were you not aware that M. Albert Savaron de Savarus is a Legitimist?"

"A Legitimist?"

"Until 1830 he was Master of Appeals to the Council of State, attached to the supreme Ministerial Council, and in favor with the Dauphin and Dauphiness. It would be very good of you to say nothing against him, but it would be better still if you would attend the election this year, carry the day, and hinder that poor M. de Chavoncourt from representing the town of Besançon."

"What sudden interest have you in this Savaron?"

"M. Albert Savaron de Savarus, the natural son of the Comte de Savarus—pray keep the secret of my indiscretion—

if he is returned deputy, will be our advocate in the suit about Les Rouxey. Les Rouxey, my father tells me, will be my property; I intend to live there, it is a lovely place! I should be broken-hearted at seeing that fine piece of the great de Watteville's work destroyed."

"The devil!" thought Amédée, as he left the house. "The heiress is not such a fool as her mother thinks her."

M. de Chavoncourt is a Royalist, of the famous 221. Hence, from the day after the revolution of July, he always preached the salutary doctrine of taking the oaths and resisting the present order of things, after the pattern of the Tories against the Whigs in England. This doctrine was not acceptable to the Legitimists, who, in their defeat, had the wit to divide in their opinions, and to trust to the force of inertia and to Providence. M. de Chavoncourt was not wholly trusted by his own party, but seemed to the Moderates the best man to choose; they preferred the triumph of his half-hearted opinions to the acclamation of a Republican who should combine the votes of the enthusiasts and the patriots.

M. de Chavoncourt, highly respected in Besançon, was the representative of an old parliamentary family; his fortune, of about fifteen thousand francs a year, was not an offense to anybody, especially as he had a son and three daughters. With such a family, fifteen thousand francs a year are a mere nothing. Now when, under these circumstances, the father of the family is above bribery, it would be hard if the electors did not esteem him. Electors wax enthusiastic over a *beau idéal* of parliamentary virtue, just as the audience in the pit do at the representation of the generous sentiments they so little practice.

Mme. de Chavoncourt, at this time a woman of forty, was one of the beauties of Besançon. While the Chamber was sitting, she lived meagerly in one of their country places to recoup herself by economy for M. de Chavoncourt's expenses in Paris. In the winter she received very creditably once a week, on Tuesdays, understanding her business as mistress of the house. Young Chavoncourt, a youth of two and twenty, and another young gentleman, named M. de Vauchelles, no



richer than Amédée and his school friend, were his intimate allies. They made excursions together to Granvelle, and sometimes went out shooting; they were so well known to be inseparable that they were invited to the country together.

Rosalie, who was intimate with the Chavoncourt girls, knew that the three young men had no secrets from each other. She reflected that if M. de Soulas should repeat her words, it would be to his two companions. Now, M. de Vauchelles had his matrimonial plans, as Amédée had his; he wished to marry Victoire, the eldest of the Chavoncourts, on whom an old aunt was to settle an estate worth seven thousand francs a year, and a hundred thousand francs in hard cash, when the contract should be signed. Victoire was this aunt's god-daughter and favorite niece. Consequently, young Chavoncourt and his friend Vauchelles would be sure to warn M. de Chavoncourt of the danger he was in from Albert's candidature.

But this did not satisfy Rosalie. She sent the Préfet of the department a letter written with her left hand, signed "*A friend to Louis Philippe*," in which she informed him of the secret intentions of M. Albert de Savarus, pointing out the serious support a Royalist orator might give to Berryer, and revealing to him the deeply artful course pursued by the lawyer during his two years' residence at Besançon. The Préfet was a capable man, a personal enemy of the Royalist party, devoted by conviction to the Government of July—in short, one of those men of whom, in the Rue de Grenelle, the Minister of the Interior could say, "We have a capital Préfet at Besançon."—The Préfet read the letter, and, in obedience to its instructions, he burnt it.

Rosalie aimed at preventing Albert's election, so as to keep him five years longer at Besançon.

At that time an election was a fight between parties, and in order to win, the Ministry chose its ground by choosing the moment when it would give battle. The elections were therefore not to take place for three months yet. When a man's whole life depends on an election, the period that elapses between the issuing of the writs for convening the electoral bodies, and the day fixed for their meetings, is an

interval during which ordinary vitality is suspended. Rosalie fully understood how much latitude Albert's absorbed state would leave her during these three months. By promising Mariette—as she afterwards confessed—to take both her and Jérôme into her service, she induced the maid to bring her all the letters Albert might send to Italy, and those addressed to him from that country. And all the time she was pondering these machinations, the extraordinary girl was working slippers for her father with the most innocent air in the world. She even made a greater display than ever of candor and simplicity, quite understanding how valuable that candor and innocence would be to her ends.

"My daughter grows quite charming!" said Mme. de Watteville.

Two months before the election a meeting was held at the house of M. Boucher senior, composed of the contractor who expected to get the work for the aqueduct for the Arcier waters; of M. Boucher's father-in-law; of M. Granet, the influential man to whom Savarus had done a service, and who was to nominate him as a candidate; of Girardet the lawyer; of the printer of the *Eastern Review*; and of the President of the Chamber of Commerce. In fact, the assembly consisted of twenty-seven persons in all, men who in the provinces are regarded as bigwigs. Each man represented on an average six votes, but in estimating their value they said ten, for men always begin by exaggerating their own influence. Among these twenty-seven was one who was wholly devoted to the Préfet, one false brother who secretly looked for some favor from the Ministry, either for himself or for someone belonging to him.

At this preliminary meeting, it was agreed that Savaron the lawyer should be named as candidate, a motion received with such enthusiasm as no one looked for from Besançon. Albert, waiting at home for Alfred Boucher to fetch him, was chatting with the Abbé de Grancey, who was interested in this absorbing ambition. Albert had appreciated the priest's vast political capacities; and the priest, touched by the young man's entreaties, had been willing to become his guide and adviser in this culminating struggle. The Chapter

did not love M. de Chavoncourt, for it was his wife's brother-in-law, as President of the Tribunal, who had lost the famous suit for them in the lower court.

"You are betrayed, my dear fellow," said the shrewd and worthy Abbé, in that gentle, calm voice which old priests acquire.

"Betrayed!" cried the lover, struck to the heart.

"By whom I know not at all," the priest replied. "But at the Préfecture your plans are known, and your hand read like a book. At this moment I have no advice to give you. Such affairs need consideration. As for this evening, take the bull by the horns, anticipate the blow. Tell them all your previous life, and thus you will mitigate the effect of the discovery on the good folks of Besançon."

"Oh, I was prepared for it," said Albert in a broken voice.

"You would not benefit by my advice; you had the opportunity of making an impression at the Hôtel de Rupt; you do not know the advantage you would have gained——"

"What?"

"The unanimous support of the Royalists, an immediate readiness to go to the election—in short, above a hundred votes. Adding to these what, among ourselves, we call the ecclesiastical vote, though you were not yet nominated, you were master of the votes by ballot. Under such circumstances, a man may temporize, may make his way——"

Alfred Boucher, when he came in, full of enthusiasm, to announce the decision of the preliminary meeting, found the Vicar-General and the lawyer, cold, calm, and grave.

"Good-night, M. l'Abbé," said Albert. "We will talk of your business at greater length when the elections are over."

And he took Alfred's arm, after pressing M. de Grancey's hand with meaning. The priest looked at the ambitious man, whose face at that moment wore the lofty expression which a general may have when he hears the first gun fired for a battle. He raised his eyes to heaven, and left the room, saying to himself, "What a priest he would make!"

Eloquence is not at the Bar. The pleader rarely puts

forth the real powers of his soul; if he did, he would die of it in a few years. Eloquence is, nowadays, rarely in the pulpit; but it is found on certain occasions in the Chamber of Deputies, when an ambitious man stakes all to win all, or, stung by a myriad darts, at a given moment bursts into speech. But it is still more certainly found in some privileged beings, at the inevitable hour when their claims must either triumph or be wrecked, and when they are forced to speak. Thus at this meeting, Albert Savarus, feeling the necessity of winning himself some supporters, displayed all the faculties of his soul and the resources of his intellect. He entered the room well, without awkwardness or arrogance, without weakness, without cowardice, quite gravely, and was not dismayed at finding himself among twenty or thirty men. The news of the meeting and of its determination had already brought a few docile sheep to follow the bell.

Before listening to M. Boucher, who was about to deluge him with a speech announcing the decision of the Boucher Committee, Albert begged for silence, and, as he shook hands with M. Boucher, tried to warn him, by a sign, of an unexpected danger.

"My young friend, Alfred Boucher, has just announced to me the honor you have done me. But before that decision is irrevocable," said the lawyer, "I think that I ought to explain to you who and what your candidate is, so as to leave you free to take back your word if my declarations should disturb your conscience!"

This exordium was followed by profound silence. Some of the men thought it showed a noble impulse.

Albert gave a sketch of his previous career, telling them his real name, his action under the Restoration, and revealing himself as a new man since his arrival at Besançon, while pledging himself for the future. This address held his hearers breathless, it was said. These men, all with different interests, were spellbound by the brilliant eloquence that flowed at boiling heat from the heart and soul of this ambitious spirit. Admiration silenced reflection. Only one thing was clear—the thing which Albert wished to get into their heads:—

Was it not far better for the town to have one of those men who are born to govern society at large than a mere voting machine? A statesman carries power with him. A commonplace deputy, however incorruptible, is but a conscience. What a glory for Provence to have found a Mirabeau, to return the only statesman since 1830 that the revolution of July had produced!

Under the pressure of this eloquence, all the audience believed it great enough to become a splendid political instrument in the hands of their representative. They all saw in Albert Savaron, Savarus the great Minister. And, reading the secret calculations of his constituents, the clever candidate gave them to understand that they would be the first to enjoy the right of profiting by his influence.

This confession of faith, this ambitious programme, this retrospect of his life and character was, according to the only man present who was capable of judging of Savarus (he has since become one of the leading men of Besançon), a masterpiece of skill and of feeling, of fervor, interest, and fascination. This whirlwind carried away the electors. Never had any man had such a triumph. But, unfortunately, speech, a weapon only for close warfare, has only an immediate effect. Reflection kills the word when the word ceases to overpower reflection. If the votes had then been taken, Albert's name would undoubtedly have come out of the ballot-box. At the moment, he was conqueror. But he must conquer every day for two months.

Albert went home quivering. The townsfolk had applauded him, and he had achieved the great point of silencing beforehand the malignant talk to which his early career might give rise. The commercial interest of Besançon had nominated the lawyer, Albert Savaron de Savarus, as its candidate.

Alfred Boucher's enthusiasm, at first infectious, presently became blundering.

The Préfet, alarmed by this success, set to work to count the Ministerial votes, and contrived to have a secret interview with M. de Chavoncourt, so as to effect a coalition in their common interests. Every day, without Albert's being

able to discover how, the voters in the Boucher Committee diminished in number.

Nothing could resist the slow grinding of the Préfecture. Three or four clever men would say to Albert's clients: "Will the deputy defend you and win your lawsuits? Will he give you advice, draw up your contracts, arrange your compromises?—He will be your slave for five years longer, if, instead of returning him to the Chamber, you only hold out the hope of his going there five years hence."

This calculation did Savarus all the more mischief, because the wives of some of the merchants had already made it. The parties interested in the matter of the bridge and that of the water from Arcier could not hold out against a talking-to from a clever Ministerialist, who proved to them that their safety lay at the Préfecture, and not in the hands of an ambitious man. Each day was a check for Savarus, though each day the battle was led by him and fought by his lieutenants—a battle of words, speeches, and proceedings. He dared not go to the Vicar-General, and the Vicar-General never showed himself. Albert rose and went to bed in a fever, his brain on fire.

At last the day dawned of the first struggle, practically the show of hands; the votes are counted, the candidates estimate their chances, and clever men can prophesy their failure or success. It is a decent hustings, without the mob, but formidable; agitation, though it is not allowed any physical display, as it is in England, is not the less profound. The English fight these battles with their fists, the French with hard words. Our neighbors have a scrimmage, the French try their fate by cold combinations calmly worked out. This particular political business is carried out in opposition to the character of the two nations.

The Radical party named their candidate; M. de Chavoncourt came forward; then Albert appeared, and was accused by the Chavoncourt Committee and the Radicals of being an uncompromising man of the Right, a second Berryer. The Ministry had their candidate, a stalking-horse, useful only to receive the purely Ministerial votes. The votes, thus divided, gave no result. The Republican candidate had twenty,

the Ministry got fifty, Albert had seventy, M. de Chavoncourt obtained sixty-seven. But the Préfet's party had perfidiously made thirty of its most devoted adherents vote for Albert, so as to deceive the enemy. The votes for M. de Chavoncourt, added to the eighty votes—the real number—at the disposal of the Préfecture would carry the election, if only the Préfet could succeed in gaining over a few of the Radicals. A hundred and sixty votes were not recorded: those of M. de Grancey's following and the Legitimists.

The show of hands at an election, like a dress rehearsal at a theater, is the most deceptive thing in the world. Albert Savarus came home, putting a brave face on the matter, but half dead. He had had the wit, the genius, or the good luck to gain, within the last fortnight, two staunch supporters—Girardet's father-in-law and a very shrewd old merchant to whom M. de Grancey had sent him. These two worthy men, his self-appointed spies, affected to be Albert's most ardent opponents in the hostile camp. Towards the end of the show of hands they informed Savarus, through the medium of M. Boucher, that thirty voters, unknown, were working against him in his party, playing the same trick that they were playing for his benefit on the other side.

A criminal marching to execution could not suffer as Albert suffered as he went home from the hall where his fate was at stake. The despairing lover could endure no companionship. He walked through the streets alone, between eleven o'clock and midnight. At one in the morning, Albert, to whom sleep had been unknown for the past three days, was sitting in his library in a deep armchair, his face as pale as if he were dying, his hands hanging limp, in a forlorn attitude worthy of the Magdalen. Tears hung on his long lashes, tears that dim the eyes, but do not fall; fierce thought drinks them up, the fire of the soul consumes them. Alone, he might weep. And then, under the kiosk, he saw a white figure, which reminded him of Francesca.

"And for three months I have had no letter from her! What has become of her? I have not written for two months, but I warned her. Is she ill? Oh my love! My life! Will

you ever know what I have gone through? What a wretched constitution is mine! Have I an aneurism?" he asked himself, feeling his heart beat so violently that its pulses seemed audible in the silence like little grains of sand dropping on a big drum.

At this moment three distinct taps sounded on his door; Albert hastened to open it, and almost fainted with joy at seeing the Vicar-General's cheerful and triumphant mien. Without a word, he threw his arms round the Abbé de Grancey, held him fast, and clasped him closely, letting his head fall on the old man's shoulder. He was a child again; he cried as he had cried on hearing that Francesca Soderini was a married woman. He betrayed his weakness to no one but to this priest, on whose face shone the light of hope. The priest had been sublime, and as shrewd as he was sublime.

"Forgive me, dear Abbe, but you come at one of those moments when the man vanishes, for you are not to think me vulgarly ambitious."

"Oh! I know," replied the Abbé. "You wrote '*Ambition for love's sake!*'—Ah! my son, it was love in despair that made me a priest in 1786, at the age of two and twenty. In 1788 I was in charge of a parish. I know life.—I have refused three bishoprics already; I mean to die at Besançon."

"Come and see her!" cried Savarus, seizing a candle, and leading the Abbé into the handsome room where hung the portrait of the Duchesse d'Argaiolo, which he lighted up.

"She is one of those women who are born to reign!" said the Vicar-General, understanding how great an affection Albert showed him by this mark of confidence. "But there is pride on that brow; it is implacable; she would never forgive an insult! It is the Archangel Michael, the angel of execution, the inexorable angel—'All or nothing' is the motto of this type of angel. There is something divinely pitiless in that head."

"You have guessed well," cried Savarus. "But, my dear Abbé, for more than twelve years now she has reigned over my life, and I have not a thought for which to blame myself——"



"Ah! if you could only say the same of God!" said the priest with simplicity. "Now, to talk of your affairs. For ten days I have been at work for you. If you are a real politician, this time you will follow my advice. You would not be where you are now if you would have gone to the Wattevelles when I first told you. But you must go there to-morrow; I will take you in the evening. The Rouxeys estates are in danger; the case must be defended within three days. The election will not be over in three days. They will take good care not to appoint examiners the first day. There will be several voting days, and you will be elected by ballot——"

"How can that be?" asked Savarus.

"By winning the Rouxeys lawsuit you will gain eighty Legitimist votes; add them to the thirty I can command, and you have a hundred and ten. Then, as twenty remain to you of the Boucher Committee, you will have a hundred and thirty in all."

"Well," said Albert, "we must get seventy-five more."

"Yes," said the priest, "since all the rest are Ministerial. But, my son, you have two hundred votes, and the Préfecture no more than a hundred and eighty."

"I have two hundred votes?" said Albert, standing stupid with amazement, after starting to his feet as if shot up by a spring.

"You have those of M. de Chavoncourt," said the Abbé.

"How?" said Albert.

"You will marry Mlle. Sidonie de Chavoncourt."

"Never!"

"You will marry Mlle. Sidonie de Chavoncourt," the priest repeated coldly.

"But you see—she is inexorable," said Albert, pointing to Francesca.

"You will marry Mlle. Sidonie de Chavoncourt," said the Abbé calmly for the third time.

This time Albert understood. The Vicar-General would not be implicated in the scheme which at last smiled on the despairing politician. A word more would have compromised the priest's dignity and honor.

"To-morrow evening at the Hôtel de Rupt you will meet Mme. de Chavoncourt and her second daughter. You can thank her beforehand for what she is going to do for you, and tell her that your gratitude is unbounded, that you are hers body and soul, that henceforth your future is that of her family. You are quite disinterested, for you have so much confidence in yourself that you regard the nomination as deputy as a sufficient fortune.

"You will have a struggle with Mme. de Chavoncourt; she will want you to pledge your word. All your future life, my son, lies in that evening. But, understand clearly, I have nothing to do with it. I am answerable only for the Legitimist voters; I have secured Mme. de Watteville, and that means all the aristocracy of Besançon. Amédée de Soulas and Vauchelles, who will both vote for you, have won over the young men; Mme. de Watteville will get the old ones. As to my electors, they are infallible."

"And who on earth has gained over Mme. de Chavoncourt?" asked Savarus.

"Ask me no questions," replied the Abbé. "M. de Chavoncourt, who has three daughters to marry, is not capable of increasing his wealth. Though Vauchelles marries the eldest without anything from her father, because her old aunt is to settle something on her, what is to become of the two others? Sidonie is sixteen, and your ambition is as good as a gold mine. Someone has told Mme. de Chavoncourt that she will do better by getting her daughter married than by sending her husband to waste his money in Paris. That someone manages Mme. de Chavoncourt, and Mme. de Chavoncourt manages her husband."

"That is enough, my dear Abbé. I understand. When once I am returned as deputy, I have somebody's fortune to make, and by making it large enough I shall be released from my promise. In me you have a son, a man who will owe his happiness to you. Great heavens! what have I done to deserve so true a friend?"

"You won a triumph for the Chapter," said the Vicar-General, smiling. "Now, as to all this, be as secret as the tomb. We are nothing, we have done nothing. If we were

known to have meddled in election matters, we should be eaten up alive by the Puritans of the Left—who do worse—and blamed by some of our own party, who want everything. Mme. de Chavoncourt has no suspicion of my share in all this. I have confided in no one but Mme. de Watteville, whom we may trust as we trust ourselves.”

“I will bring the Duchess to you to be blessed!” cried Savarus.

After seeing out the old priest, Albert went to bed in the swaddling clothes of power.

Next evening, as may well be supposed, by nine o'clock Mme. la Baronne de Watteville's rooms were crowded by the aristocracy of Besançon in convocation extraordinary. They were discussing the exceptional step of going to the poll, to oblige the daughter of the de Rupts. It was known that the former Master of Appeals, the secretary of one of the most faithful ministers under the Elder Branch, was to be presented that evening. Mme. de Chavoncourt was there with her second daughter Sidonie, exquisitely dressed, while her elder sister, secure of her lover, had not indulged in any of the arts of the toilet. In country towns these little things are remarked. The Abbé de Grancey's fine and clever head was to be seen moving from group to group, listening to everything, seeming to be apart from it all, but uttering those incisive phrases which sum up a question and direct the issue.

“If the Elder Branch were to return,” said he to an old statesman of seventy, “what politicians would they find?”—“Berryer, alone on his bench, does not know which way to turn; if he had sixty votes, he would often scotch the wheels of the Government and upset ministries!”—“The Duc de Fitz-James is to be nominated at Toulouse.”—“You will enable M. de Watteville to win his lawsuit.”—“If you vote for M. Savarus, the Republicans will vote with you rather than with the Moderates!” etc., etc.

At nine o'clock Albert had not arrived. Mme. de Watteville was disposed to regard such delay as an impertinence.

“My dear Baroness,” said Mme. de Chavoncourt, “do

not let such serious issues turn on such a trifle. The varnish on his boots is not dry—or a consultation, perhaps, detains M. de Savarus.”

Rosalie shot a side glance at Mme. de Chavoncourt.

“She is very lenient to M. de Savarus,” she whispered to her mother.

“You see,” said the Baroness with a smile, “there is a question of a marriage between Sidonie and M. de Savarus.”

Mlle. de Watteville hastily went to a window looking out over the garden.

At ten o'clock Albert de Savarus had not yet appeared. The storm that threatened now burst. Some of the gentlemen sat down to cards, finding the thing intolerable. The Abbé de Grancey, who did not know what to think, went to the window where Rosalie was hidden, and exclaimed aloud in his amazement, “He must be dead!”

The Vicar-General stepped out into the garden, followed by M. de Watteville and his daughter, and they all three went up to the kiosk. In Albert's rooms all was dark; not a light was to be seen.

“Jérôme!” cried Rosalie, seeing the servant in the yard below. The Abbé looked at her with astonishment. “Where in the world is your master?” she asked the man, who came to the foot of the wall.

“Gone—in a post-chaise, mademoiselle.”

“He is ruined!” exclaimed the Abbé de Grancey, “or he is happy!”

The joy of triumph was not so effectually concealed on Rosalie's face that the Vicar-General could not detect it. He affected to see nothing.

“What can this girl have had to do with this business?” he asked himself.

They all three returned to the drawing-room, where M. de Watteville announced the strange, the extraordinary, the prodigious news of the lawyer's departure, without any reason assigned for his evasion. By half-past eleven only fifteen persons remained, among them Mme. de Chavoncourt and the Abbé de Godenars, another Vicar-General, a man of about forty, who hoped for a bishopric, the two Chavoncourt

girls, and M. de Vauchelles, the Abbé de Grancey, Rosalie, Amédée de Soulas, and a retired magistrate, one of the most influential members of the upper circle of Besançon, who had been very eager for Albert's election. The Abbé de Grancey sat down by the Baroness in such a position as to watch Rosalie, whose face, usually pale, wore a feverish flush.

"What can have happened to M. de Savarus?" said Mme. de Chavoncourt.

At this moment a servant in livery brought in a letter for the Abbé de Grancey on a silver tray.

"Pray read it," said the Baroness.

The Vicar-General read the letter; he saw Rosalie suddenly turn as white as her kerchief.

"She recognizes the writing," said he to himself, after glancing at the girl over his spectacles. He folded up the letter, and calmly put it in his pocket without a word. In three minutes he had met three looks from Rosalie which were enough to make him guess everything.

"She is in love with Albert Savarus!" thought the Vicar-General.

He rose and took leave. He was going towards the door when, in the next room, he was overtaken by Rosalie, who said—

"M. de Grancey, it was from Albert!"

"How do you know that it was his writing, to recognize it from so far?"

The girl's reply, caught as she was in the toils of her impatience and rage, seemed to the Abbé sublime.

"I love him!—What is the matter?" she said after a pause.

"He gives up the election."

Rosalie put her finger to her lip.

"I ask you to be as secret as if it were a confession," said she before returning to the drawing-room. "If there is an end of the election, there is an end of the marriage with Sidonie."

In the morning, on her way to Mass, Mlle. de Watteville heard from Mariette some of the circumstances which

had prompted Albert's disappearance at the most critical moment of his life.

"Mademoiselle, an old gentleman from Paris arrived yesterday morning at the Hôtel National; he came in his own carriage with four horses, and a courier in front, and a servant. Indeed, Jérôme, who saw the carriage returning, declares he could only be a prince or a *miuord*."

"Was there a coronet on the carriage?" asked Rosalie.

"I do not know," said Mariette. "Just as two was striking he came to call on M. Savarus, and sent in his card; and when he saw it, Jérôme says monsieur turned as pale as a sheet, and said he was to be shown in. As he himself locked the door, it is impossible to tell what the old gentleman and the lawyer said to each other; but they were together above an hour, and then the old gentleman, with the lawyer, called up his servant. Jérôme saw the servant go out again with an immense package, four feet long, which looked like a great painting on canvas. The old gentleman had in his hand a large parcel of papers. M. Savaron was paler than death, and he, so proud, so dignified, was in a state to be pitied. But he treated the old gentleman so respectfully that he could not have been politer to the King himself. Jérôme and M. Albert Savaron escorted the gentleman to his carriage, which was standing with the horses in. The courier started on the stroke of three.

"M. Savaron went straight to the Préfecture, and from that to M. Gentillet, who sold him the old traveling carriage that used to belong to Mme. de Saint-Vier before she died; then he ordered post-horses for six o'clock. He went home to pack; no doubt he wrote a lot of letters; finally, he settled everything with M. Girardet, who went to him and stayed till seven. Jérôme carried a note to M. Boucher, with whom his master was to have dined; and then, at half-past seven, the lawyer set out, leaving Jérôme with three months' wages, and telling him to find another place.

"He left his keys with M. Girardet, whom he took home, and at his house, Jérôme says, he took a plate of soup, for at half-past seven M. Girardet had not yet dined. When M. Savaron got into the carriage again he looked like death.

Jérôme, who, of course, saw his master off, heard him tell the postilion 'The Geneva Road!'

"Did Jérôme ask the name of the stranger at the Hôtel National?"

"As the old gentleman did not mean to stay, he was not asked for it. The servant, by his orders no doubt, pretended not to speak French."

"And the letter which came so late to the Abbé de Grancey?" said Rosalie.

"It was M. Girardet, no doubt, who ought to have delivered it; but Jérôme says that poor M. Girardet, who was much attached to lawyer Savaron, was as much upset as he was. So he who came so mysteriously, as Mlle. Galard says, is gone away just as mysteriously."

After hearing this narrative, Mlle. de Watteville fell into a brooding and absent mood, which everybody could see. It is useless to say anything of the commotion that arose in Besançon on the disappearance of M. Savaron. It was understood that the Préfet had obliged him with the greatest readiness by giving him at once a passport across the frontier, for he was thus quit of his only opponent. Next day M. de Chavoncourt was carried to the top by a majority of a hundred and forty votes.

"Jack is gone by the way he came," said an elector on hearing of Albert Savaron's flight.

This event lent weight to the prevailing prejudice at Besançon against strangers; indeed, two years previously they had received confirmation from the affair of the Republican newspaper. Ten days later Albert de Savarus was never spoken of again. Only three persons—Girardet the attorney, the Vicar-General, and Rosalie—were seriously affected by his disappearance. Girardet knew that the white-haired stranger was Prince Soderini, for he had seen his card, and he told the Vicar-General; but Rosalie, better informed than either of them, had known for three months past that the Duc d'Argaiolo was dead.

In the month of April 1836 no one had had any news from or of Albert de Savarus. Jérôme and Mariette were to be married, but the Baroness confidentially desired her maid to

wait till her daughter was married, saying that the two weddings might take place at the same time.

"It is time that Rosalie should be married," said the Baroness one day to M. de Watteville. "She is nineteen, and she is fearfully altered in these last months."

"I do not know what ails her," said the Baron.

"When fathers do not know what ails their daughters, mothers can guess," said the Baroness; "we must get her married."

"I am quite willing," said the Baron. "I shall give her Les Rouxey now that the Court has settled our quarrel with the authorities of Riceys by fixing the boundary line at three hundred feet up the side of the Dent de Vilard. I am having a trench made to collect all the water and carry it into the lake. The village did not appeal, so the decision is final."

"It has never yet occurred to you," said Mme. de Watteville, "that this decision cost me thirty thousand francs handed over to Chantonnet. That peasant would take nothing else; he sold us peace.—If you give away Les Rouxey, you will have nothing left," said the Baroness.

"I do not need much," said the Baron; "I am breaking up"

"You eat like an ogre!"

"Just so. But however much I may eat, I feel my legs get weaker and weaker——"

"It is from working the lathe," said his wife.

"I do not know," said he.

"We will marry Rosalie to M. de Soulas; if you give her Les Rouxey, keep the life interest. I will give them fifteen thousand francs a year in the Funds. Our children can live here; I do not see that they are much to be pitied."

"No. I shall give them Les Rouxey out and out. Rosalie is fond of Les Rouxey."

"You are a queer man with your daughter! It does not occur to you to ask me if I am fond of Les Rouxey."

Rosalie, at once sent for, was informed that she was to marry M. de Soulas one day early in the month of May.

"I am very much obliged to you, mother, and to you too,



father, for having thought of settling me; but I do not mean to marry; I am very happy with you."

"Mere speeches!" said the Baroness. "You are not in love with M. de Soulas, that is all."

"If you insist on the plain truth, I will never marry M. de Soulas——"

"Oh! the *never* of a girl of nineteen!" retorted her mother, with a bitter smile.

"The *never* of Mlle. de Watteville," said Rosalie with firm decision. "My father, I imagine, has no intention of making me marry against my wishes?"

"No, indeed no!" said the poor Baron, looking affectionately at his daughter.

"Very well!" said the Baroness, sternly controlling the rage of a bigot startled at finding herself unexpectedly defied, "you yourself, M. de Watteville, may take the responsibility of settling your daughter. Consider well, mademoiselle, for if you do not marry to my mind you will get nothing out of me!"

The quarrel thus begun between Mme. de Watteville and her husband, who took his daughter's part, went so far that Rosalie and her father were obliged to spend the summer at Les Rouxeys; life at the Hôtel de Rupt was unendurable. It thus became known in Besançon that Mlle. de Watteville had positively refused the Comte de Soulas.

After their marriage Mariette and Jérôme came to Les Rouxeys to succeed to Modinier in due time. The Baron restored and repaired the house to suit his daughter's taste. When she heard that these improvements had cost about sixty thousand francs, and that Rosalie and her father were building a conservatory, the Baroness understood that there was a leaven of spite in her daughter. The Baron purchased various outlying plots, and a little estate worth thirty thousand francs. Mme. de Watteville was told that, away from her, Rosalie showed masterly qualities, that she was taking steps to improve the value of Les Rouxeys, that she had treated herself to a riding habit and rode about; her father, whom she made very happy, who no longer complained of his health, and who was growing fat, accompanied her in her

expeditions. As the Baroness's name-day drew near—her name was Louise—the Vicar-General came one day to Les Rouxey, deputed, no doubt, by Mme. de Watteville and M. de Soulas, to negotiate a peace between the mother and daughter.

“That little Rosalie has a head on her shoulders,” said the folk of Besançon.

After handsomely paying up the ninety thousand francs spent on Les Rouxey, the Baroness allowed her husband a thousand francs a month to live on; she would not put herself in the wrong. The father and daughter were perfectly willing to return to Besançon for the 15th of August, and to remain there till the end of the month.

When, after dinner, the Vicar-General took Mlle. de Watteville apart, to open the question of the marriage, by explaining to her that it was vain to think any more of Albert, of whom they had had no news for a year past, he was stopped at once by a sign from Rosalie. The strange girl took M. de Grancey by the arm, and led him to a seat under a clump of rhododendrons, whence there was a view of the lake.

“Listen, dear Abbé,” said she. “You whom I love as much as my father, for you had an affection for my Albert, I must at last confess that I committed crimes to become his wife, and he must be my husband.—Here; read this.”

She held out to him a number of the *Gazette* which she had in her apron pocket, pointing out the following paragraph under the date of Florence, May 25th:—

“The wedding of M. le Duc de Rhétoré, eldest son of the Duc de Chaulieu, the former Ambassador, to Mme. la Duchesse d'Argaiolo, née Princesse Soderini, was solemnized with great splendor. Numerous entertainments given in honor of the marriage are making Florence gay. The Duchess's fortune is one of the finest in Italy, for the late Duke left her everything.”

“The woman he loved is married,” said she. “I divided them.”

“You? How?” asked the Abbé.

Rosalie was about to reply, when she was interrupted by

a loud cry from two of the gardeners, following on the sound of a body falling into the water; she started, and ran off screaming, "Oh! father!"—The Baron had disappeared.

In trying to reach a piece of granite on which he fancied he saw the impression of a shell, a circumstance which would have contradicted some system of geology, M. de Watteville had gone down the slope, lost his balance, and slipped into the lake, which, of course, was deepest close under the roadway. The men had the greatest difficulty in enabling the Baron to catch hold of a pole pushed down at the place where the water was bubbling, but at last they pulled him out, covered with mud, in which he had sunk; he was getting deeper and deeper in, by dint of struggling. M. de Watteville had dined heavily, digestion was in progress, and was thus checked.

When he had been undressed, washed, and put to bed, he was in such evident danger that two servants at once set out on horseback: one to ride to Besançon, and the other to fetch the nearest doctor and surgeon. When Mme. de Watteville arrived, eight hours later, with the first medical aid from Besançon, they found M. de Watteville past all hope, in spite of the intelligent treatment of the Rouxey doctor. The fright had produced serious effusion on the brain, and the shock to the digestion was helping to kill the poor man.

This death, which would never have happened, said Mme. de Watteville, if her husband had stayed at Besançon, was ascribed by her to her daughter's obstinacy. She took an aversion for Rosalie, abandoning herself to grief and regrets that were evidently exaggerated. She spoke of the Baron as "her dear lamb!"

The last of the Watteilles was buried on an island in the lake at Les Rouxey, where the Baroness had a little Gothic monument erected of white marble, like that called the tomb of Héloïse at Père-Lachaise.

A month after this catastrophe the mother and daughter had settled in the Hôtel de Rupt, where they lived in savage silence. Rosalie was suffering from real sorrow, which had no visible outlet; she accused herself of her father's death, and she feared another disaster, much greater in her eyes,

and very certainly her own work; neither Girardet the attorney nor the Abbé de Grancey could obtain any information concerning Albert. This silence was appalling. In a paroxysm of repentance she felt that she must confess to the Vicar-General the horrible machinations by which she had separated Francesca and Albert. They had been simple, but formidable. Mlle. de Watteville had intercepted Albert's letters to the Duchess as well as that in which Francesca announced her husband's illness, warning her lover that she could write to him no more during the time while she was devoted, as was her duty, to the care of the dying man. Thus, while Albert was wholly occupied with election matters, the Duchess had written him only two letters; one in which she told him that the Duc d'Argaiolo was in danger, and one announcing her widowhood—two noble and beautiful letters, which Rosalie kept back.

After several nights' labor she succeeded in imitating Albert's writing very perfectly. She had substituted three letters of her own writing for three of Albert's, and the rough copies which she showed to the old priest made him shudder—the genius of evil was revealed in them to such perfection. Rosalie, writing in Albert's name, had prepared the Duchess for a change in the Frenchman's feelings, falsely representing him as faithless, and she had answered the news of the Duc d'Argaiolo's death by announcing the marriage ere long of Albert and Mlle. de Watteville. The two letters, intended to cross on the road, had, in fact, done so. The infernal cleverness with which the letters were written so much astonished the Vicar-General that he read them a second time. Francesca, stabbed to the heart by a girl who wanted to kill love in her rival, had answered the last in these four words: "You are free. Farewell."

"Purely moral crimes, which give no hold to human justice, are the most atrocious and detestable," said the Abbé severely. "God often punishes them on earth; herein lies the reason of the terrible catastrophes which to us seem inexplicable. Of all secret crimes buried in the mystery of private life, the most disgraceful is that of breaking the seal of a letter, or of reading it surreptitiously. Everyone,

whoever it may be, and urged by whatever reason, who is guilty of such an act has stained his honor beyond retrieving.

"Do you not feel all that is touching, that is heavenly in the story of the youthful page, falsely accused, and carrying the letter containing the order for his execution, who sets out without a thought of ill, and whom Providence protects and saves—miraculously, we say! But do you know wherein the miracle lies? Virtue has a glory as potent as that of innocent childhood.

"I say these things not meaning to admonish you," said the old priest, with deep grief. "I, alas! am not your spiritual director; you are not kneeling at the feet of God; I am your friend, appalled by dread of what your punishment may be. What has become of that unhappy Albert? Has he, perhaps, killed himself? There was tremendous passion under his assumption of calm. I understand now that old Prince Soderini, the father of the Duchesse d'Argaiolo, came here to take back his daughter's letters and portraits. This was the thunderbolt that fell on Albert's head, and he went off, no doubt, to try to justify himself. But how is it that in fourteen months he has given us no news of himself?"

"Oh! if I marry him, he will be so happy!"

"Happy?—He does not love you. Besides, you have no great fortune to give him. Your mother detests you; you made her a fierce reply which rankles, and which will be your ruin. When she told you yesterday that obedience was the only way to repair your errors, and reminded you of the need for marrying, mentioning Amédée—'If you are so fond of him, marry him yourself, mother!'—Did you, or did you not, fling these words in her teeth?"

"Yes," said Rosalie.

"Well, I know her," M. de Grancey went on. "In a few months she will be Comtesse de Soulas! She will be sure to have children; she will give M. de Soulas forty thousand francs a year; she will benefit him in other ways, and reduce your share of her fortune as much as possible. You will be poor as long as she lives, and she is but eight and thirty! Your whole estate will be the land of Les Rouxey, and the

small share left to you after your father's legal debts are settled, if, indeed, your mother should consent to forego her claims on Les Rouxey. From the point of view of material advantages, you have done badly for yourself; from the point of view of feeling, I imagine you have wrecked your life. Instead of going to your mother——" Rosalie shook her head fiercely.

"To your mother," the priest went on, "and to religion, where you would, at the first impulse of your heart, have found enlightenment, counsel, and guidance, you chose to act in your own way, knowing nothing of life, and listening only to passion!"

These words of wisdom terrified Mlle. de Watteville.

"And what ought I to do now?" she asked after a pause.

"To repair your wrong-doing, you must ascertain its extent," said the Abbé.

"Well, I will write to the only man who can know anything of Albert's fate, M. Léopold Hannequin, a notary in Paris, his friend from childhood."

"Write no more, unless to do honor to truth," said the Vicar-General. "Place the real and the false letters in my hands, confess everything in detail as though I were the keeper of your conscience, asking me how you may expiate your sins, and doing as I bid you. I shall see—for, above all things, restore this unfortunate man to his innocence in the eyes of the woman he had made his divinity on earth. Though he has lost his happiness, Albert must still hope for justification."

Rosalie promised to obey the Abbé, hoping that the steps he might take would perhaps end in bringing Albert back to her.

Not long after Mlle. de Watteville's confession a clerk came to Besançon from M. Léopold Hannequin, armed with a power of attorney from Albert; he called first on M. Girardet, begging his assistance in selling the house belonging to M. Savaron. The attorney undertook to do this out of friendship for Albert. The clerk from Paris sold the furniture, and with the proceeds could repay some money owed by Savaron to Girardet, who on the occasion of his inex-

plicable departure had lent him five thousand francs while undertaking to collect his assets. When Girardet asked what had become of the handsome and noble pleader, to whom he had been much attached, the clerk replied that no one knew but his master, and that the notary had seemed greatly distressed by the contents of the last letter he had received from M. Albert de Savarus.

On hearing this, the Vicar-General wrote to Léopold. This was the worthy notary's reply:—

“To M. l'Abbé de Grancey,

“Vicar-General of the Diocese of Besançon.

“PARIS.

“Alas! monsieur, it is in nobody's power to restore Albert to the life of the world; he has renounced it. He is a novice in the monastery of the Grande Chartreuse near Grenoble. You know, better than I who have but just learned it, that on the threshold of that cloister everything dies. Albert, foreseeing that I should go to him, placed the General of the Order between my utmost efforts and himself. I know his noble soul well enough to be sure that he is the victim of some odious plot unknown to us; but everything is at an end. The Duchesse d'Argaiolo, now Duchesse de Rhétoré, seems to me to have carried severity to an extreme. At Belgirate, which she had left when Albert flew thither, she had left instructions leading him to believe that she was living in London. From London Albert went in search of her to Naples, and from Naples to Rome, where she was now engaged to the Duc de Rhétoré. When Albert succeeded in seeing Mme. d'Argaiolo, at Florence, it was at the ceremony of her marriage.

“Our poor friend swooned in church, and even when he was in danger of death he could never obtain any explanation from this woman, who must have had I know not what in her heart. For seven months Albert had traveled in pursuit of a cruel creature who thought it sport to escape him; he knew not where or how to catch her.

“I saw him on his way through Paris; and if you had seen him, as I did, you would have felt that not a word might

be spoken about the Duchess, at the risk of bringing on an attack which might have wrecked his reason. If he had known what his crime was, he might have found means to justify himself; but being falsely accused of being married!—what could he do? Albert is dead, quite dead to the world. He longed for rest: let us hope that the deep silence and prayer into which he has thrown himself may give him happiness in another guise. You, monsieur, who have known him, must greatly pity him; and pity his friends also.

“Yours, etc.”

As soon as he received this letter the good Vicar-General wrote to the General of the Carthusian order, and this was the letter he received from Albert Savarus:—

“Brother Albert to M. l'Abbé de Grancey,

“Vicar-General of the Diocese of Besançon.

“LA GRANDE CHARTREUSE.

“I recognized your tender soul, dear and well-beloved Vicar-General, and your still youthful heart, in all that the reverend Father-General of our Order has just told me. You have understood the only wish that lurks in the depths of my heart so far as the things of the world are concerned—to get justice done to my feelings by her who has treated me so badly! But before leaving me at liberty to avail myself of your offer, the General wanted to know that my vocation was sincere; he was so kind as to tell me his idea, on finding that I was determined to preserve absolute silence on this point. If I had yielded to the temptation to rehabilitate the man of the world, the friar would have been rejected by this monastery. Grace has certainly done her work; but, though short, the struggle was not the less keen or the less painful. Is not this enough to show you that I could never return to the world?

“Hence my forgiveness, which you ask for the author of so much woe, is entire and without a thought of vindictiveness. I will pray to God to forgive that young lady as I forgive her, and as I shall beseech him to give Mme. de Rhétoré a life of happiness. Ah! whether it be death, or



the obstinate hand of a young girl madly bent on being loved, or one of the blows ascribed to chance, must we not all obey God? Sorrow in some souls makes a vast void through which the Divine Voice rings. I learned too late the bearings of this life on that which awaits us; all in me is worn out; I could not serve in the ranks of the Church Militant, and I lay the remains of an almost extinct life at the foot of the altar.

"This is the last time I shall ever write. You alone, who loved me, and whom I loved so well, could make me break the law of oblivion I imposed on myself when I entered these headquarters of Saint Bruno, but you are always especially named in the prayers of

"BROTHER ALBERT."

"November 1836."

"Everything is for the best perhaps," thought the Abbé de Grancey.

When he showed this letter to Rosalie, who, with a pious impulse, kissed the lines which contained her forgiveness, he said to her—

"Well, now that he is lost to you, will you not be reconciled to your mother and marry the Comte de Soulas?"

"Only if Albert should order it," said she.

"But you see it is impossible to consult him. The General of the Order would not allow it."

"If I were to go to see him?"

"No Carthusian sees any visitor. Besides, no woman but the Queen of France may enter a Carthusian monastery," said the Abbé. "So you have no longer any excuse for not marrying young M. de Soulas."

"I do not wish to destroy my mother's happiness," retorted Rosalie.

"Satan!" exclaimed the Vicar-General.

Towards the end of that winter the worthy Abbé de Grancey died. This good friend no longer stood between Mme. de Watteville and her daughter, to soften the impact of those two iron wills.

The event he had foretold took place. In the month of

August 1837 Mme. de Watteville was married to M. de Soulas in Paris, whither she went by Rosalie's advice, the girl making a show of kindness and sweetness to her mother. Mme. de Watteville believed in this affection on the part of her daughter, who simply desired to go to Paris to give herself the luxury of a bitter revenge; she thought of nothing but avenging Savarus by torturing her rival.

Mlle. de Watteville had been declared legally of age; she was, in fact, not far from one and twenty. Her mother, to settle with her finally, had resigned her claims on Les Rouxey, and the daughter had signed a release for all the inheritance of the Baron de Watteville. Rosalie encouraged her mother to marry the Comte de Soulas and settle all her own fortune on him.

"Let us each be perfectly free," she said.

Mme. de Soulas, who had been uneasy as to her daughter's intentions, was touched by this liberality, and made her a present of six thousand francs a year in the Funds as conscience money. As the Comtesse de Soulas had an income of forty-eight thousand francs from her own lands, and was quite incapable of alienating them in order to diminish Rosalie's share, Mlle. de Watteville was still a fortune to marry, of eighteen hundred thousand francs; Les Rouxey, with the Baron's additions, and certain improvements, might yield twenty thousand francs a year, besides the value of the house, rents and preserves. So Rosalie and her mother, who soon adopted the Paris style and fashions, easily obtained introductions to the best society. The golden key—eighteen hundred thousand francs—embroidered on Mlle. de Watteville's stomacher, did more for the Comtesse de Soulas than her pretensions *à la de Rupt*, her inappropriate pride, or even her rather distant great connections.

In the month of February 1838 Rosalie, who was eagerly courted by many young men, achieved the purpose which had brought her to Paris. This was to meet the Duchesse de Rhétoré, to see this wonderful woman, and to overwhelm her with perennial remorse. Rosalie gave herself up to the most bewildering elegance and vanities in order to face the Duchess on an equal footing.

They first met at a ball given annually after 1830 for the benefit of the pensioners on the old Civil List. A young man, prompted by Rosalie, pointed her out to the Duchess, saying—

“There is a very remarkable young person, a strong-minded young lady too! She drove a clever man into a monastery—the Grande Chartreuse—a man of immense capabilities, Albert de Savarus, whose career she wrecked. She is Mlle. de Watteville, the famous Besançon heiress——”

The Duchess turned pale. Rosalie’s eyes met hers with one of those flashes which, between woman and woman, are more fatal than the pistol shots of a duel. Francesca Soderini, who had suspected that Albert might be innocent, hastily quitted the ballroom, leaving the speaker at his wits’ end to guess what terrible blow he had inflicted on the beautiful Duchesse de Rhétoré.

“If you want to hear more about Albert, come to the Opera ball on Tuesday with a marigold in your hand.”

This anonymous note, sent by Rosalie to the Duchess, brought the unhappy Italian to the ball, where Mlle. de Watteville placed in her hand all Albert’s letters, with that written to Léopold Hannequin by the Vicar-General, and the notary’s reply, and even that in which she had written her own confession to the Abbé de Grancey.

“I do not choose to be the only sufferer,” she said to her rival, “for one has been as ruthless as the other.”

After enjoying the dismay stamped on the Duchess’s beautiful face, Rosalie went away; she went out no more, and returned to Besançon with her mother.

Mlle. de Watteville, who lived alone on her estate of Les Rouxey, riding, hunting, refusing two or three offers a year, going to Besançon four or five times in the course of the winter, and busying herself with improving her land, was regarded as a very eccentric personage. She was one of the celebrities of the Eastern provinces.

Mme. de Soulas has two children, a boy and a girl, and

she has grown younger; but young M. de Soulas has aged a good deal.

"My fortune has cost me dear," said he to young Chavoncourt. "Really to know a bigot it is unfortunately necessary to marry her!"

Mlle. de Watteville behaves in the most extraordinary manner. "She has vagaries," people say. Every year she goes to gaze at the walls of the Grande Chartreuse. Perhaps she dreams of imitating her grand-uncle by forcing the walls of the monastery to find a husband, as Watteville broke through those of his monastery to recover his liberty.

She left Besançon in 1841, intending, it was said, to get married; but the real reason of this expedition is still unknown, for she returned home in a state which forbids her ever appearing in society again. By one of those chances of which the Abbé de Grancey had spoken, she happened to be on the Loire in a steamboat of which the boiler burst. Mlle. de Watteville was so severely injured that she lost her right arm and her left leg; her face is marked with fearful scars, which have bereft her of her beauty; her health, cruelly upset, leaves her few days free from suffering. In short, she now never leaves the Chartreuse of Les Rouxey, where she leads a life wholly devoted to religious practices.

PARIS, May 1842.



